Special Double Issue

BEST TVs, COMPUTERS, SOUNDBARS, FROZEN MEALS, HEARING AIDS, AND MUCH MORE

CR Consumer Reports®

MAY/JUNE 2023

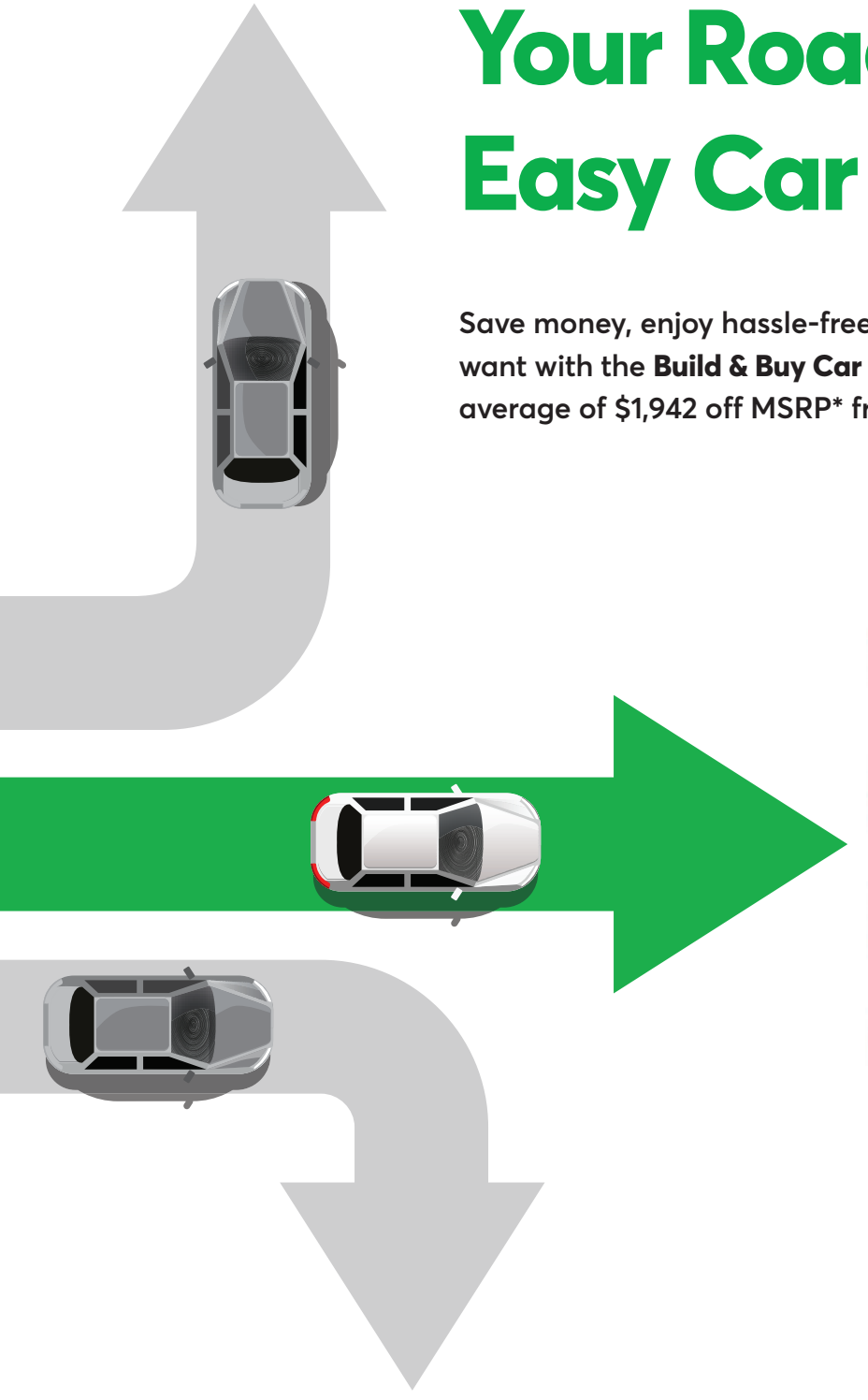
815
PRODUCTS
RATED & REVIEWED

SAVE BIG AT HOME

AND WASTE LESS

Easy new ways to cut costs by over $6,500—indoors and out

Your Road Map to Easy Car Shopping



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- **LOCATE** the dealership from our prescreened network of over 15,000
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cr.org/buildandbuy

*Between 1/1/21 and 12/31/21, the average savings off MSRP experienced by consumers who connected with a TrueCar Certified Dealer through the Consumer Reports Build & Buy Program and who were identified as buying a new vehicle from that Certified Dealer was $1,942. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors, including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer incentives, which are subject to change. The MSRP is determined by the manufacturer and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area, as many vehicles are sold below MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing.

CR

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MAY/JUNE 2023, VOL. 88 NO. 5

Special Double Issue!

113 pages with 815 products rated & reviewed

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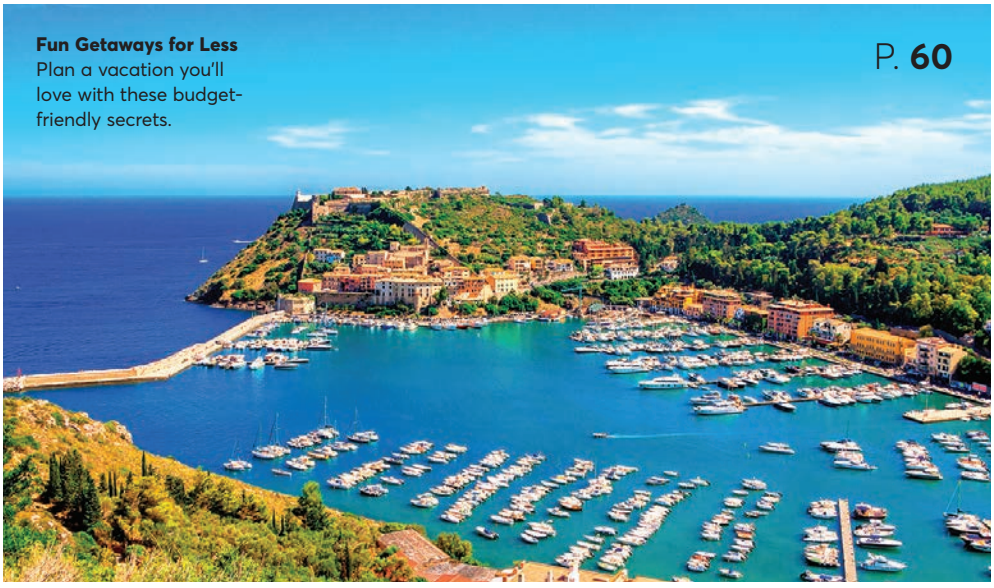

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ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

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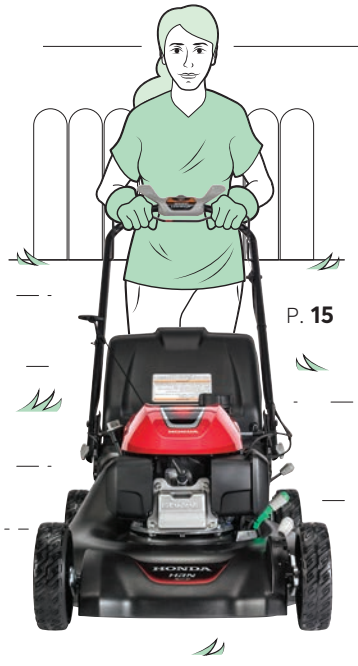

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For **Selling It,** send items to **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org.** See page 113 for more details.
ACCOUNT INFORMATION Go to **CR.org/magazine** or call 800-333-0663. See box at right for more details.
RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

WORSE — BETTER

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Repair Instead of Replace

WHY IS IT so complicated and costly to get your computer or phone fixed when it breaks? Too often, your only options are to either use the manufacturer's preferred repair service (at a possibly inflated price) or buy a new product. That's because some companies have restricted access to the parts and tools needed to fix their products.

A 2021 CR nationally representative survey of more than 2,000 adults found that a majority have replaced a broken product sooner than they wanted to because they couldn't find an acceptable repair option. And 84 percent support laws requiring that information and parts be made available to independent services and/or product owners.

CR is working to secure your right to more easily repair the products you own. Last December, we raised consumer voices in an effort that helped pass New York's Digital Fair Repair Act, giving the state's residents more choice in how they can get tech products like laptops and phones fixed. It's the first law in the U.S. that puts this power back into consumers' hands.

But we can't stop there. All Americans deserve more control over the technology they rely on. And even New York's groundbreaking legislation doesn't cover appliances like washing machines and refrigerators.

In this issue, CR shares practical tips for extending the life of your products, like replacing the battery in your smartphone, and finding other ways to save (while wasting less as well), starting on page 28. We're also mobilizing consumers to support establishing the right to repair for all Americans. You can help urge state and federal lawmakers to take action at **CR.org/righttorepair**.

Together, we can loosen the grip of companies on the products you purchase, putting control of your tech in your own hands.

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PHOTO: VICTORIA WILL

Fighting for Safer Furniture

In recent decades, hundreds of children have been killed, and tens of thousands more seriously injured, when furniture, appliances, or televisions toppled over onto them. Tragically, many of these tip-over incidents could have been prevented.

But a new federal law passed in December, known as the STURDY Act, will help reduce tip-overs by ensuring that furniture is built to be more stable. And CR—working with other consumer groups, industry representatives, and parents of tip-over victims—played a key role in getting the new law passed.

Begun over a decade ago, CR's crusade against tip-overs gained momentum in 2017 when we started conducting stability tests on dressers. That research revealed that the voluntary testing standard then in place was inadequate, and we called on the furniture industry and regulators to strengthen that standard and make it mandatory. Our tests also showed it was possible to design more stable furniture that is also affordable—undercutting the objection that rigorous, mandatory testing standards would make that furniture too pricey for many consumers.

Years of advocacy followed, including the founding of Parents Against Tip-overs (PAT)—parents who have bravely shared their heartbreaking stories.

Starting in mid-2023, all new dressers will have to undergo rigorous "real-world" tests, such as having multiple drawers open at the same time. CR is urging retailers to stop selling dressers that haven't cleared the new standards, and encourages parents to anchor all furniture in their homes.

8,900

children under 18 are treated in emergency rooms for injuries caused by tip-overs each year, on average.

SOURCE: CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

CALL TO ACTION

Recent CR testing found concerning amounts of lead and cadmium in several popular brands of dark chocolate. These heavy metals are linked to a host of health problems in children and adults. Go to **CR.org/chocolatepetition** to join CR in calling on the manufacturers of these brands—Trader Joe's, Hershey's, Mondelez, and Theo—to commit to reducing the level of toxins in their products and to report back to the public on their progress. And go to **CR.org/darkchocolate** to learn more, including which dark chocolate brands appear to be safer.

Keeping Health Data Private

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Many Americans believe that the federal law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, guarantees blanket privacy protection for any personal information related to our health.

In fact, HIPAA applies to only certain types of entities, including healthcare providers and insurance companies, while many others are free to sell health data gleaned from their apps and websites to advertisers and marketers.

WHAT CR IS DOING ABOUT IT

CR has been shining a light on this problem for years, crying foul on such practices by companies' apps that track workouts, menstrual periods, user's mental health, and DNA testing, among others. In 2020 we reported that GoodRx, which provides coupons for prescription drugs, was sending personal health information about its users to Google, Facebook, and other technology and marketing companies.

GoodRx pledged to tighten its privacy protections, but CR's work now appears likely to have a broader reach: In February, citing CR's report, the Federal Trade Commission formally accused GoodRx of violating federal law and fined it $1.5 million. If courts uphold the action, experts say, it could change the way all tech companies handle health information. "With this case, the FTC is saying that sharing out data without your consent is simply not allowed," says Justin Brookman, CR director of technology policy.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

In the meantime, go to **CR.org/hipaaguide** for info on understanding when your personal health data is protected, and when it is not.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RITTER

The Surprising Problem With
Dark Chocolate
BARS THAT ARE HIGH IN HEAVY METALS
BIG DISCOUNTS ON GROCERIES
CARS WITH AMAZING NEW FEATURES
SAFETY ALERT FOR DARK CHOCOLATE
CR Consumer Reports
Sleep Great Tonight
The best mattresses, pillows, sheets, masks, air purifiers, alarm clocks, and more

Our February 2023 article **"The Surprising Problem With Dark Chocolate"** shared CR's testing, which found worrisome levels of heavy metals in this treat, and gave advice on safer choices. Readers offered their thoughts. To add yours, head to **CR.org/darkchocolatetests**.

THANK YOU FOR exploring heavy metals in the chocolate I love. But isn't it possible that the metal levels for a given brand change as time passes? Perhaps enormously? Thus the brand name may not be nearly as important as the article implies? It saddens me to say it, but maybe we just need to eat less? *–Joseph Bates, Newton, MA*

EDITOR'S NOTE *Yes, it's possible that levels of heavy metals in the chocolate bars tested will change, and some companies are taking steps to make that happen. Your suggestion to eat less is also a good idea. All types of chocolate are best enjoyed as an occasional treat due to the calories and added sugars they contain.*

AS A DARK chocolate lover, I read this article with great interest. You state that "dark chocolate tends to be higher in heavy metals than milk chocolate, probably because of its higher cacao content." On page 38, listed among several safer choices are Ghirardelli 86 percent cacao and Ghirardelli 72 percent cacao. Yet the 86 percent product is significantly lower in both lead and cadmium than the 72 percent product. Can you explain? *–Jerry Feldman, Vancouver, WA*

EDITOR'S NOTE *Cacao content refers to both cocoa solids and cocoa butter–the mix varies by chocolate recipe–but heavy metals are found primarily in the cocoa solids. A product with 86 percent cacao content–such as the Ghirardelli bar you mention–may have a higher proportion of cocoa butter to cocoa solids and thus lower levels of heavy metals. Or it could be that the cocoa beans come from different growing areas. Plus, while products with more cocoa solids generally have higher levels of heavy metals, that's not always the case because there are still variations among products.*

GREAT REPORTING IN "The Surprising Problem With Dark Chocolate." Does the level of heavy metals vary according to the chocolate's place of origin? For example, as CR has reported, rice grown in Arkansas and Texas can have much higher concentrations of arsenic than rice grown in California. As with rice, might I reduce my exposure to heavy metals by consuming chocolate from regions known to have lower levels of these materials in their cacao? *–Robert Mele, via CR.org*

EDITOR'S NOTE *Heavy metals in cacao can vary depending on where it is grown and processed. But labels don't always clearly state where the products were sourced or produced. And even knowing the country of origin may not be enough–you may need to know exactly where in a country the product came from. So it's hard to factor location into your buying decision. Instead, our best advice is to choose dark chocolate with lower percentages of cacao–and limit how much you eat.*

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

SECRETS TO BETTER SLEEP

I JUST FINISHED "How to Get a Great Night's Sleep" in the February 2023 issue. I was a bit surprised not to see anything on bamboo sheets. My wife and I both sleep hot. A friend suggested we try bamboo sheets, and they have been wonderful. I also have a bamboo pillow, and the combination is awesome. *–Jim Arthur, Houston*

EDITOR'S NOTE *While bamboo sheets are a breathable option, we didn't include them in our initial testing because they aren't as widely available as cotton.*

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

But we're updating our ratings of sheets this year with new products, including those made from linen and bamboo.

I THINK THERE are two other factors impacting both long-term cost and usability of mattresses. Many are too thick to fit standard-depth sheets, and deep or even ultra-deep-pocket sheets tend to be significantly more expensive. Also, it's hard to lift a heavy mattress to rotate it or to make the bed. How about addressing mattress height and weight?
–Lorraine Sanders, Ivins, UT

EDITOR'S NOTE *We include the dimensions for every mattress in our online ratings at* **CR.org/mattressratings.** *Standard sheets will fit mattresses with a thickness of 8 to 14 inches. But our tests have found that lighter weights tend to translate into poorer mattress quality. If you want a mattress that's easier to handle, check our ratings for those that have grip handles on the sides.*

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SAVING WITH COUPONS

YOUR FEBRUARY 2023 article "CR's Guide to Saving Big With Coupons" covered everything in depth except for how to save on groceries when using delivery services. I have not found a way to use coupons in that instance. Any suggestions?
–Karen Deitemeyer, Melbourne, FL

EDITOR'S NOTE *Delivery services handle coupons in a variety of ways. For example, shoppers using Peapod, which services Stop & Shop, can hand an envelope filled with coupons to their delivery person or leave it in a conspicuous spot for unattended deliveries. The coupons will then be deducted upon payment. Instacart only honors manufacturer coupons listed on its platform, and FreshDirect doesn't honor manufacturer coupons but has its own coupons and promo codes on its website. Using curbside pickup at a local store can be your best bet. Stores like Albertsons, Kroger, Giant Eagle, Publix, Meijer, and Target all accept coupons at pickup.*

USED-CAR FINANCING

ONE MORE THING to know on "How to Finance a Used Car" in the February 2023 issue: Ask your lender if there's a penalty for paying off your loan earlier than the stated term. If there isn't, you can take the longer term for more breathing room, knowing you can make extra payments to pay it off sooner.
–Bill Bagnall, Portland, OR

WHERE'S MY PILLOW?

In "How to Get a Great Night's Sleep" in the February 2023 issue, you didn't include any My Pillow products in the ratings of pillows on page 33. The products are advertised nationally, and I assume they must sell a sizable number of units. Why weren't they mentioned?
—Michael Wildermuth, Freehold, NJ

EDITOR'S NOTE *We included only a small selection of top-rated pillows in the article, all having scores ranging from 71 to 90. With an overall score of 68, the My Pillow Premium ($34.99) is very good overall but missed the cut. Digital and All-Access members can see the details for that model and for the My Pillow Classic (its overall score was 58, $39.99) as well as many other pillows at* ***CR.org/pillowratings.***

NEW-CAR FEATURES

REGARDING "NEW CAR Features We Love (and Some We Don't)" in the February 2023 issue, I would add to the "some we don't" column: cars that have no spare tire and no run-flat tires. If you get a flat, your car may have to be taken on a flatbed truck for repairs. This is not only a costly inconvenience, it can be unsafe.
–Donald Fagelman, Sands Point, NY

EDITOR'S NOTE *Spare tires have been vanishing as automakers reduce weight to boost fuel economy. If a car you're considering doesn't come with a spare, there may still be a storage place for one under the cargo floor, and spares can often be purchased from the dealer.*

I CAN'T SHARE your enthusiasm for automatic high beam dimmers. They further erode the need for drivers to know their car's features and how to correctly operate them. And a faulty dimmer could activate the high beams at the wrong time, blinding an oncoming driver.
–Ronald Russell, Lodi, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE *Automated features aren't designed to alleviate a driver's responsibility for understanding and operating their vehicle. However, a 2017 study* showed that many drivers don't opt for the additional visibility that high beams offer as often as they should. Also, in 2020 about 75 percent of pedestrian fatalities happened after dark, according to an analysis of data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The additional high beam light has the potential to help reduce those accidents.*

*Study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Bike Helmets

WE TESTED: 89 models
WE TEST FOR: The helmet's ability to absorb the impact of a crash, how easy it is to adjust the straps for a secure fit, how much ventilation the helmet offers, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 70
Range: 33-90

AN EXCELLENT FIT
Bontrager Starvos WaveCel
$105

90 OVERALL SCORE

BEST PICK UNDER $50
Bell Granite MIPS
$35

82 OVERALL SCORE

GREAT FOR KIDS
Giro Raze
$45

74 OVERALL SCORE

Carpet Cleaners

WE TESTED: 20 models
WE TEST FOR: How well the cleaner removes red clay stains from carpeting, how much solution is left behind after cleaning, ease of filling the tank, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 56
Range: 31-72

FIRST-RATE CLEANER
Hoover PowerDash Pet Advanced FH55000
$150

72 OVERALL SCORE

TOPS AT DRYING
Bissell ProHeat 2X Lift-Off Pet 15651
$300

71 OVERALL SCORE

NICE PRICE
Hoover PowerDash Pet FH50700
$100

69 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

Is it smarter to buy or rent a carpet cleaner?

IT'S PROBABLY BETTER to buy one. Most people will want to deep-clean their carpeting at least once a year—and even more frequently if they have pets, says CR tester Larry Ciufo. The cost of buying a carpet cleaner is typically $100 to $400. On the other hand, renting one from stores like Lowe's and Home Depot costs about $35 to $39 per day, but there's the hassle of hauling a heavy cleaner from the store and back. That's why it may be wiser in the long run to buy your own machine if you have the storage space. We recommend you opt for a top-rated lower-priced model like the $100 Hoover, above. After using it just three times, you'll save money over a rental.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

WiFi Routers

WE TESTED: 57 mesh models
WE TEST FOR: Ease of setup; signal speeds at 8 feet, 20 feet, and 49 feet away; how the device and its manufacturer collect, share, and use your data; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 73
Range: 31-83

EASIEST TO SET UP
Asus ZenWiFi AX Hybrid Powerline Mesh WiFi6 System (2-pack)
$335

83 OVERALL SCORE

BEST DATA PRIVACY CONTROLS
Linksys AX3200 E8452 (2-pack)
$230

83 OVERALL SCORE

WELL-PRICED 3-PACK TO COVER LARGER HOMES
Netgear Orbi AC1200 RBK13 (3-pack)
$200

82 OVERALL SCORE

Stick Vacuums

WE TESTED: 32 cordless models
WE TEST FOR: How well a vacuum picks up debris from carpeting, bare floors, and along wall edges; average run time; noise; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 62
Range: 40-76

BEST OVERALL & QUIET
Samsung Jet 90 Complete VS20R9046T3/AA
$650

76 OVERALL SCORE

LONG RUN TIME (35 MIN. AVERAGE)
Shark Vertex Pro IZ662H
$450

74 OVERALL SCORE

LOWER-COST PICK
Hoover ONEPWR Blade+ BH53310
$200

64 OVERALL SCORE

Wood Stains

WE TESTED: 21 solid and semi-transparent stains
WE TEST FOR: How it endures after up to three years of weathering on wood panels; how it resists cracking, mildew, and color changes.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 37
Range: 8-82

STAIN THAT STILL LOOKS GREAT AFTER THREE YEARS
Behr Premium Solid Color Waterproofing Stain & Sealer (Home Depot)
$50

82 OVERALL SCORE

GOOD SOLID STAIN FOR SIDING
Cabot Solid Color Acrylic Siding Stain $45

68 OVERALL SCORE

BEST SEMI-TRANSPARENT STAIN
Olympic Elite Advanced Stain + Sealant in One Semi-Transparent
$50

41 OVERALL SCORE

All-Season SUV Tires

WE TESTED: 15 tires
WE TEST FOR: Handling, ride comfort, noise, stopping performance on wet and dry roads, how many miles the tread will last, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 64
Range: 58-74

SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE & QUIET
Vredestein HiTrac
$169

69 OVERALL SCORE

IMPRESSIVE TREAD LIFE
Goodyear Assurance ComfortDrive
$199

67 OVERALL SCORE

A WHEEL DEAL
Kumho Crugen HP71
$139

66 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Air Conditioners & More

When you buy a new TV or phone, is it a good idea to hang on to the original box?

IT'S ALWAYS SMART to keep the box and the paperwork in it for the duration of the retailer's return period (which can be anywhere from 14 to 90 days), particularly when it's a pricey tech product, such as a smartphone or camera. Some retailers, including Amazon, require that their devices be returned in the original packaging. Best Buy's return policy says that it may deny the return if a product isn't given back in its original packaging.

When it comes to larger electronic items—such as televisions and computer monitors—it's a good idea to hang on to the packaging (including the foam padding inserts) for the duration of the product warranty, often about a year. That way, if you need to send the product for repairs, you have access to a box that fits and secures the device. (A standard TV-sized moving box can cost $40 or more, and a laptop box can cost about $25.)

It's also important to keep the box if it's a premium item—such as a pricey iPhone—that you may want to resell later. "Imagine searching eBay and finding two identical iPhones listed at the same price, but only one comes with the original box," says Melanie Pinola, a CR senior tech reporter. "Which would you choose?"

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

Is it okay to pour used cooking oil down the drain?

NO, NEVER. CR's experts agree that fats, oils, and grease (aka FOGs) should never go down the drain. FOGs might start out in a liquid state, which seems harmless enough, but those materials will congeal and can eventually cause clogs farther downstream—and even end up causing sewer overflows.

One simple solution is to pour leftover cooled grease into a used plastic tub or zipper bag, and toss it into your household trash. This will save the grease from clogging your pipes, but it can also be a messy, smelly way to handle the stuff.

A better method we've found is to use an "oil solidifier." This is a flaked or powdered product that can be sprinkled into leftover hot cooking oil to make it gelatinous. Then it's easy to scoop the solid oil out of your pan and toss it into the garbage without the added step of pouring it into a container first.

CR staffer Perry Santanachote tried out several oil-solidifying products available on Amazon (FryAway, Hard Oil, Quickshine, and SolidiFry)—as well as stearic acid flakes, which can also be used as a solidifier. Santanachote reports that all the products she tried at home worked well to gelatinize cooking oil in roughly the same amount of time. (It takes about 30 minutes to solidify ⅓ cup of hot oil.) But some are fairly pricey, like FryAway at $4.76 per ounce. For this reason, we suggest using stearic acid, which costs just $1 an ounce. Only 2 tablespoons are needed per cup of hot oil.

How can I keep pollen from getting inside my car's cabin?

SPRING IS IN the air, and unfortunately for some of us, that means airborne tree pollen is, too. If you notice that your allergies are acting up while you drive with your windows closed, check and potentially replace your car's cabin air filter. This filter keeps the air inside the car free of allergens and contaminants, and it needs to be replaced about every 15,000 to 30,000 miles.

Your mechanic can change it for you—typically for about $100—but you can do it yourself for the cost of the filter (about $35). The cabin air filter is usually accessed through your glove box—and some are pretty easy to reach. Instructions can often be found in your owner's manual. John Ibbotson, CR's chief mechanic, says YouTube instructional videos can also be helpful when you're replacing the filter yourself.

Another important way to keep pollen out of your car is to wash the car regularly, particularly if you usually park outside. When pollen coats your car's exterior, it not only increases the likelihood of pollen finding its way inside but also can damage your car's paint if it builds up.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

CR Insights

Lauren Friedman
Health Editor

I OWN THIS!

IN THE KNOW

Stay Cool This Summer

These smart buys will help you feel more comfortable when it's hot out.

PORTABLE COOLER

Coleman 18-Quart Party Stacker Cooler $40

When we tested coolers a few years ago, this inexpensive Coleman model won a top spot for keeping ice frozen for a full day in 100° F heat. Plus, it weighs only 4.4 pounds when empty but is roomy enough to hold 20 cans of soda.

ICE CREAM ALFRESCO

S'well Ice Cream Pint Cooler $35

Want to bring some ice cream on your next picnic? S'well offers a great new way to do that: This small vacuum-insulated cooler is designed to keep a pint of your favorite frozen treat chilled for several hours—even when it's hot out.

A TASTY FROZEN TREAT

Oatly Non-Dairy Frozen Dessert Chocolate $5.50

53 OVERALL SCORE

Oatly was a top pick in our testing of 14 vegan "ice creams." We liked its slightly nutty flavor and smooth texture, plus it's lower in calories (200) and saturated fat (7 grams) per ⅔-cup serving than many other pints we tried.

WATERPROOF FOOTWEAR

Birkenstock Arizona Essentials EVA sandals $50

These sandals are supportive, durable, and—unlike traditional Birkenstocks—totally waterproof. "Another benefit is that they weigh almost nothing, making them easy to throw in a bag and take with you," says CR's Lauren Friedman.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMATI. PHOTO: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS

Turn the page for more of our favorite summer products.

STAY COOL THIS SUMMER *Continued*

INDOOR CHILLER

Lasko FH500 $120

We tested the Lasko as a space heater, but it is also a cooling fan, so you can use it year-round. It comes with a remote, an oscillating tower, and a 3-year warranty.

100% UV-BLOCKING SUNGLASSES

Warby Parker Fletcher* $95

These highly protective shades work hard to shield eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays, helping to prevent issues like cataracts.

DELICIOUS COLD BREW

Asobu Insulated Portable Brewer KB900 $70

The Asobu cold brew coffee maker aced our taste tests. The stainless steel bottom is an insulated carafe that detaches for on-the-go drinking.

Trisha Calvo
Health & Food Editor

I OWN THIS!

COOL WATER BOTTLE

24-oz. Hydro Flask $40

We like this dishwasher-safe wide-mouth flask because it keeps water cold for 24 hours and weighs less than a pound—perfect for taking on long walks.

BREATHABLE AIR

Midea MAD20S1QWT Dehumidifier $197

This quiet unit helps pull moisture out of the air in a smaller room (under 600 sq. ft.). Drier air can also keep allergens like dust mites at bay.

COMFY SUN PROTECTION

Athleta Point Break Rashguard $84

"Having had melanoma, I'm careful about protecting my skin from the sun," says CR's Trisha Calvo. "I'm especially fond of Athleta rashguards."

PHOTOS, BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: KENNETH BERGER HEARING AID MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES; CONSUMER REPORTS; AP PHOTO/BARRY THUMMA; CONSUMER REPORTS; LOLABEK; PHILIPS

*CR rating applies to the overall satisfaction of Warby Parker as an eyeglasses retailer, not this particular pair. Rating is based on our fall 2022 survey of 11,450 CR members who bought eyeglasses within the two years prior to October 2022.

CR Time Traveler HEARING AIDS

1930s Wearable hearing aids, like this Sonotone product, gain in popularity. Consumers like that the battery and microphone are hidden under clothing, with only the earpiece in view.

1943 In our first report on hearing aids, we find that many Americans skip them due to the cost. Some aids are as much as $185—about $3,274 in today's dollars.

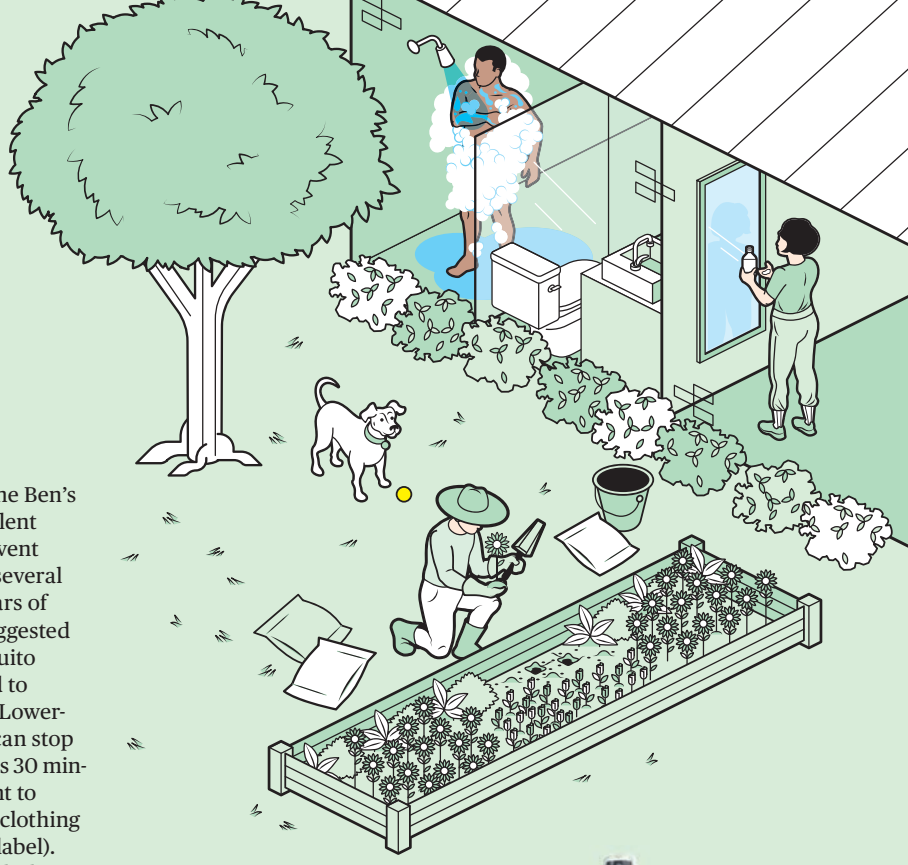
1950-51 CR reveals the latest research on hearing problems, and tests 25 aids. A "sturdy" $75 Zenith pair performs well and also costs the least.

1966 CR tests a Bazooka toy from Mattel and finds that it registers at 145 decibels (dBA) when fired—enough to cause severe hearing loss.

1974 Hearing safety standards require that lawn mowers hit no more than 92 dBA when in use, but CR says 85 dBA is a safer number.

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

Proven Anti-Tick Strategies



THE NUMBER OF tickborne diseases is on the rise. In a 2021 study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that just under half a million cases of Lyme disease occurred in the U.S. each year between 2010 and 2018—a significant increase over 2005 to 2010. What's more: At least nine new tick- (and mosquito-) borne diseases have been reported in the U.S. and its territories. But these strategies can help keep you safe.

› **Dress right.** Wear a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and pants (for easy tick-spotting), socks, and closed-toe shoes when walking in tall grass or wooded areas. Tuck your shirt into your pants and the pants into your socks so that it's harder for ticks to reach your skin.

› **Arm yourself with an effective repellent.** Our tests reveal that choosing the right repellent is key to keeping bugs from biting. Top-rated products, such as the Ben's Tick & Insect Repellent shown at right, prevent mosquito bites for several hours—and past years of our testing have suggested that effective mosquito repellents also tend to work against ticks. Lower-scoring repellents can stop working in as little as 30 minutes. Apply repellent to exposed skin or on clothing (as directed on the label). Never put it under clothing.

› **Cut your lawn short.** Ticks prefer the shade of tall grass (5 to 6 inches high), so trimming your lawn to about 3 inches makes it less hospitable to ticks.

› **Protect pets, too.** Ticks can hitch a ride on your pets, bringing them into your home and potentially making your dog or cat sick. So it's vital to use an EPA-registered or FDA-approved anti-tick product on your pets in tick-prone areas. Talk with your vet about which products are effective and safe. And check your pets for ticks after they've been outside, feeling for small bumps under their fur.

› **Take a shower within 2 hours of a woodland walk.** Changing out of clothes that might have ticks is an important way to reduce the risk of disease. Toss clothes in the dryer on high for 10 minutes to kill any ticks clinging to them, and do a thorough tick check of your body while in the shower.

Ben's Tick & Insect Repellent Wilderness Formula Pump
$6

95 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS, THIS SPREAD, TOP: MANUFACTURERS; CONSUMER REPORTS

1983 President Ronald Reagan begins wearing a hearing aid publicly, helping to destigmatize Americans' use of hearing aids.

1997 We test a new Echo backpack leaf blower that claims to be the quietest of its kind, but our testing finds that it's as loud as other models at 90 dBA.

2009 We follow 12 consumers as they shop for hearing aids, which often cost $6,000-plus per pair. What's more: Two-thirds weren't fitted properly by their providers.

Hear well in a noisy world

2017 The U.S. Congress passes the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act, paving the way for consumers to buy aids without a prescription.

2023 Based on our latest survey results,* Philips prescription hearing aids are a top-rated brand, with notably easy battery changing and charging. Turn to page 51 of this issue for our full ratings.

Philips
75 OVERALL SATISFACTION

*CR's winter 2021 survey of 26,788 CR members who bought a prescription hearing aid in or after 2017.

FOOD IQ™

The Best Grocery Store Guacamole

GUACAMOLE IS ONE of the healthiest dips you can eat–you can actually consider it a vegetable. Avocado, the main ingredient, is rich in fiber, potassium, and antioxidants. We compared supermarket guacs and found that most had similar amounts of calories, fats, fiber, and sodium. (Sodium levels were generally high, with ¼ cup ranging from 220 to 330 mg.) What did separate the dips was how fresh they tasted, and some of the ingredients they contain. Here's what we found.

BEST TASTING

Herdez Traditional Guacamole, Mild

$3.15, 8 ounces

CALORIES: 120 SAT. FAT: 2 g
FIBER: 2 g SODIUM: 220 mg

The avocado flavor hits big time in this chunky guac. The cilantro, peppers, onions, and lime juice are also nicely balanced.

NEXT BEST TASTING

Sabra Classic Guacamole

$5, 8 ounces

CALORIES: 100 SAT. FAT: 2 g
FIBER: 2 g SODIUM: 300 mg

While Sabra's guacamole is less chunky than Herdez', our tasters liked that it contains lots of cilantro, jalapeño, and tomato.

A SMOOTHER DIP

Cabo Fresh Classic Guacamole, Mild

$4.50, 12 ounces

CALORIES: 100 SAT. FAT: 1 g
FIBER: 4 g SODIUM: 280 mg

The texture of this dip is silkier and lighter than the others. It has a citrus kick along with some onion, garlic, and bell pepper.

ALSO SMOOTH

Calavo Authentic Guacamole, Mild

$6.50, 12 ounces

CALORIES: 100 SAT. FAT: 1 g
FIBER: 4 g SODIUM: 230 mg

While the Calavo guac is smooth with hints of garlic and jalapeño, the avocado tastes slightly over-ripe and bitter.

FOR GARLIC LOVERS

Wholly Classic Guacamole, Mild

$3.90, 7.5 ounces

CALORIES: 140 SAT. FAT: 2 g
FIBER: 2 g SODIUM: 280 mg

We noticed strong garlic and onion flavors, with a jalapeño pepper kick to this dip. But the overall taste is a little bitter.

SPICY & A BIT SLICK

Yucatan Authentic Guacamole, Mild

$5, 8 ounces

CALORIES: 100 SAT. FAT: 1 g
FIBER: 4 g SODIUM: 280 mg

Yucatan's dip has pepper flavor, but it's also a bit sour. Its smooth, slightly slick texture is possibly due to xantham gum.

FOR A HEALTHIER TORTILLA CHIP ...

1. Look for bean-based chips, such as Beanitos Black Bean Tortilla Chips (shown at right), which have roughly the same number of calories (130 per ounce) as regular tortilla chips but more protein and fiber.

2. Try unsalted versions. No-salt chips have 0 mg of sodium, instead of the 115 mg of sodium per 1-ounce serving (that's 7 to 10 chips) found in some regular tortilla chips. (Keep in mind that you'll still get a hit of salt from most dips.)

3. Skip "baked" chips. While these do contain less fat overall, the calorie count is similar to regular fried chips. And baked tortilla chips can have a little more sodium (we've seen an extra 20 mg per serving) to perk up the flavor.

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ADOBE STOCK; CONSUMER REPORTS; BEANITOS

Note: All guacamole nutrition information is based on ¼-cup serving.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

EASIER MOWING

PUSHING A MOWER—even if your lawn is not so big—can be hard work. The solution is a self-propelled mower, which has powered wheels. While these cost a few hundred dollars more than regular "push" mowers, the ease of using them may be worth the price. All 12 self-propelled mowers shown here are tops in our handling tests. If you have a sloped yard, a model with all-wheel drive (AWD), like the Ryobi RY401210US, offers better traction on hills. The rest of the models below are rear-wheel drive, which work well for mostly flat yards. Also note that top-rated battery-powered models offer similar performance to gas but require less upkeep because they don't need oil changes or frequent tuneups. But their estimated run times (30 to 45 minutes) make them better suited to smaller yards.

GAS SELF-PROPELLED MOWERS

Honda HRX217HZA $1,100

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 BAGGING

87 OVERALL SCORE

Honda HRN216VKA $550 *(above)*

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING

84 OVERALL SCORE

Toro Super Recycler 21387 $700

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING

76 OVERALL SCORE

Toro Super Recycler 21386 $600

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING

76 OVERALL SCORE

Craftsman M320 $450

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING

73 OVERALL SCORE

Cub Cadet SC 900 $450

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 5/5 BAGGING

70 OVERALL SCORE

BATTERY SELF-PROPELLED MOWERS

Greenworks MO80L421 $750

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

85 OVERALL SCORE

Ryobi RY401210US (AWD) $900

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

84 OVERALL SCORE

Ego LM2156SP-2 $1,000

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

83 OVERALL SCORE

Ego LM2156SP $800

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 3/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

82 OVERALL SCORE

Ryobi RY401150US $650

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

82 OVERALL SCORE

Ryobi RY401140US $550

- 5/5 HANDLING
- 4/5 BAGGING
- 5/5 RUN TIME
- 4/5 CHARGE TIME

81 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS; CONSUMER REPORTS

For the complete and latest ratings, Digital and All Access members can go to CR.org/mowers.

THE BETTER DEAL

ELECTRIC SUVs

HIGHER PRICE
$59,290 - $68,290

Genesis GV60
$60,220*
84 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$48,700 - $61,600

Kia EV6
$52,840*
91 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

THESE TWO electric vehicles hail from the Hyundai Motor Group, sharing many powertrain components. Like the Kia, the stylish Genesis is comfy, quick, quiet, and agile. However, the Kia offers slightly better handling, albeit with a ride that's a bit less plush. The Kia also has a longer range (by about 25 miles) and costs $10,000 less.

PORTABLE GENERATORS

HIGHER PRICE
$1,700

Honda EG4000CL with CO-Minder
76 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$730

Green-Power GN5250DCS
77 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

BOTH OF THESE generators can run for up to 19 hours on a full tank. The gas-powered Honda has six power outlets compared with the Green-Power's three. But the lower-cost and lighter-weight Green-Power (which uses gas or propane) delivered smoother, more consistent power in our tests. Plus, it has built-in wheels for portability. Wheels for the Honda are sold separately.

ELECTRIC MOUNTAIN BIKES

HIGHER PRICE
$3,850

Trek Powerfly 4
86 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$2,900

Giant Talon E+
80 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

AS WITH MANY of the electric mountain bikes we've tested, this top-rated Trek model is nimble, capable, and tons of fun. However, the Giant is equal in most ways to the Trek. In our tests, it climbed hills easily, handled uneven trails well, braked nicely, and was a joy to ride. In short, this is a bike that works well and costs almost $1,000 less than the Trek.

PHOTOS, FROM TOP: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS; CONSUMER REPORTS

*Price as tested.

SPORTS CARS

HIGHER PRICE
$64,500 - $126,150

Chevrolet Corvette
$77,680*

87 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$44,040 - $58,845

Toyota Supra
$56,115*

82 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

THE CORVETTE is an American-bred supercar without the crazy-high price of a Ferrari or McLaren. It has tremendous track abilities, and it certainly turns heads. But the Supra is highly entertaining in its own right for far less money, with rapid acceleration, sharp handling, and much better fuel economy. It's far more rewarding to drive than its slightly lower score suggests.

BLENDERS

HIGHER PRICE
$730

Vitamix A3500 Stainless Steel Blender

82 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$220

Ninja Professional Plus Kitchen System BN801

82 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

VITAMIX, A BRAND known for its reliable, powerful blenders, dominates the top spots in our ratings with pricey models like this highly rated A3500. But the Ninja matches everything it can do, from crushing ice and making excellent smoothies to puréeing raw veggies. It even adds convenience features, like personal-sized blender cups, for roughly a third of the price.

INNERSPRING MATTRESSES

HIGHER PRICE
$2,000

Avocado Green

84 OVERALL SCORE

BETTER PRICE
$800

Denver Mattress Doctor's Choice Plush

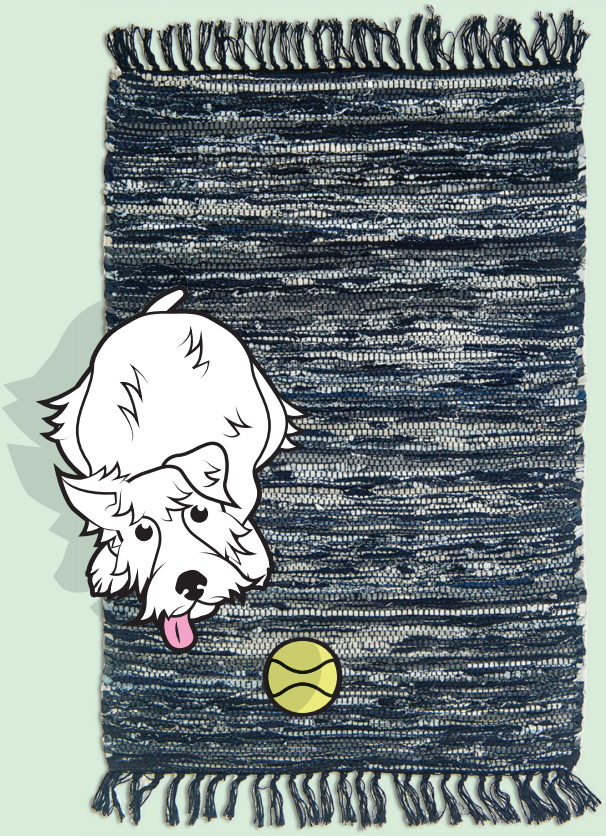
82 OVERALL SCORE

THE LOWDOWN

THE AVOCADO GREEN is CR's top-rated mattress–but for less than half the price, the Denver Mattress delivers equally excellent support for back sleepers. Its "plush" design is also a great choice if you prefer a softer feel. And, like the Avocado, the Denver Mattress maintained its shape and support over eight years of simulated use in our labs.

PHOTOS, FROM TOP: MANUFACTURERS; CONSUMER REPORTS

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE



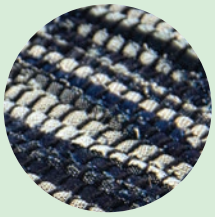
SAVVY SHOPPER

Machine-Washable Rugs

AREA RUGS MAKE your home more cozy and comfortable, but they take a beating, especially in high-traffic spots like your entryway or kitchen, or in rooms shared with a pet. Sending your typical silk, sisal, or wool rugs to the cleaners can get expensive: A 5x7 rug, for example, can cost up to $280 for professional cleaning. Enter the washable rug. A growing number of brands are making rugs designed to be thrown directly into your own washing machine.

To find out just how washable these new rugs are, our staffers took home eight rugs from popular brands and dirtied them up. The rugs were stained with wine, coffee, beet juice, ketchup, marinara sauce, pet waste, and more. We treated each stain according to the manufacturer's instructions, then used CR's top-rated detergents and reviewers' standard-sized washing machines. (For larger 5x7 rugs, check that your washer has at least a 4.2 cubic foot drum capacity.)

Some of the rugs labeled as machine washable didn't clean up well: Either the stains didn't budge, or the rug came out of the washer rumpled and didn't lay as flat after drying. But the four rugs shown at right washed well, with tough stains removed and the rugs still in good condition.



Revival Boot Cut Washable Rug $109 and up

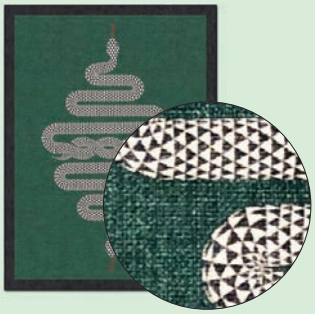
Size: 2 ft. x 3 ft.
Care: Machine-washable, hang-dry for 36 hours.
CR'S TAKE: This small dark blue rug made from 100 percent recycled cotton feels soft under your feet and hides stains well. After having ketchup, coffee, and wine dumped on it, a 30-minute gentle cycle in a washer got rid of the resulting stains. The only drawback? It took more than a full day for this little rug to hang-dry.

Ruggable Moroccan Ornate Plush Rug $309 and up

Size: 5 ft. x 7 ft.
Care: Machine-wash cold water delicate cycle. Dry on low heat or hang-dry for 36 hours.
CR'S TAKE: Ruggable's super-soft rug is a breeze to clean. When a berry smoothie was spilled on it, a damp towel alone removed the stain. The other stains on the rug vanished after machine-washing it on a delicate cycle—and the rug looked fresh after drying.

Lorena Canals Woolable Rug Lakota Day $629

Size: 5 ft. 7 in. x 7 ft. 11 in.
Care: Machine-wash in cold water. Dry on low heat.
CR'S TAKE: A single machine-washing got rid of the big coffee stain we made on this luxe wool and cotton rug. It can go in the dryer, too, though given its larger size, it may require more than 2 hours to get completely dry. Also, the plush pile isn't as easy to vacuum as other rugs we tried, and it sheds a bit.



Ruggable Jonathan Adler Venom Emerald Rug $119 and up

Size: 2 ft. x 3 ft.
Care: Machine-wash in cold water using a delicate cycle. Dry on low heat or hang-dry for about an hour.
CR'S TAKE: This rug is easy to vacuum, and stayed in good shape even though it was used in a high-traffic kitchen. Some stains came out quickly when towel-blotted with cold water, and the rest were gone after a spin in the washing machine.

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

For more detailed reviews of these and other rugs, go to CR.org/rugs23.

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

HONDA FIT & HR-V VEHICLES

Honda is recalling 114,686 2018-2020 Fit and 2019-2022 HR-V vehicles because their backup cameras might not display when the vehicle is in Reverse, which could cause a crash. The problem is due to a faulty circuit in the vehicle's audio system and affects only vehicles that have a physical ignition key instead of a push-button start. Cranking the engine using the key ignition could cause the vehicle's battery charge to drop and prevent the backup camera display from appearing.
What to do: Honda dealers will perform a software update to fix the problem, free of charge. Owners who have already paid to have this work performed before the recall was issued may be able to seek reimbursement from Honda. Owners of affected vehicles will be contacted by Honda by mail, but they can also call Honda at 888-234-2138. The NHTSA campaign number for this recall is 23V046, and Honda's own number is 6DW.

FABULOSO MULTI-PURPOSE CLEANERS

Colgate-Palmolive is recalling about 4.9 million Fabuloso Multi-Purpose cleaners because they can contain Pseudomonas bacteria, including Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Pseudomonas fluorescens, which are environmental organisms found widely in soil and water. People with weakened immune systems, external medical devices, or underlying lung conditions who are exposed to the bacteria face a risk of serious infection. The bacteria can enter the body by inhalation, through the eyes, or through a break in the skin. People with healthy immune systems are usually not affected.
What to do: Stop using the cleaner. Call Colgate-Palmolive at 855-703-0166 or go to fabulosorecall.com for details and to get a full refund or a free replacement. You should take a picture of the product's UPC and lot code, then dispose of the product in its container with household trash; do not empty it prior to disposal.

FISHER-PRICE ROCK 'N PLAY SLEEPERS

Fisher-Price is reannouncing its 2019 recall of about 4.7 million Rock 'n Play sleepers, originally triggered by a Consumer Reports investigation, after more infant deaths were linked to the product. Deaths can occur when infants roll onto their stomach or side, or under other circumstances. They were sold at major stores nationwide, including Target and Walmart, and online at Amazon from September 2009 through April 2019 for $40 to $149.
What to do: Stop using the sleeper immediately. Call Fisher-Price at 866-812-6518 or go to mattel.com for details. It is illegal to sell or distribute the recalled sleepers.

LIFTMASTER GARAGE DOOR CONTROL PANELS

Chamberlain is recalling about 96,400 LiftMaster myQ garage door control panels because the panel can fail, causing the garage door to close even with an obstruction present, posing an entrapment hazard. The control panels were sold online and at Home Depot, Lowe's, Menards, and other stores and distributors nationwide from March 2022 through October 2022 for about $60 when sold as an accessory and $500 to $700 when sold as a bundle.
What to do: Call Chamberlain at 833-775-1951 or go to liftmaster.com for details.

BISSELL WET DRY VACUUMS

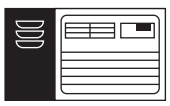
Bissell is recalling about 61,000 cordless multi-surface wet dry vacuums because the battery pack can overheat, posing a fire hazard. The vacuums were sold at Walmart stores nationwide and online at acehardware.com, Amazon, bissell.com, costco.com, qvc.com, walmart.com, and others from January 2019 through November 2022 for about $360.
What to do: Stop using the vacuum. Call Bissell at 855-417-7001 or go to bissell.com for details and to get a free battery pack replacement.

86-INCH LG SMART TVs

LG Electronics is recalling about 52,000 86-inch smart televisions and stands because the TV can become unstable while on the assembled stand, posing tip-over and entrapment hazards, particularly to children, that can result in injuries or death. The TVs were sold at Best Buy, Costco, Walmart, and other stores nationwide and online from March 2022 through September 2022 for $1,100 to $1,900.
What to do: Detach the television from the stand and place the TV away from kids. Text "STAND" to 256-888-9977 or call 800-243-0000 for details and instructions on how to inspect the unit and to obtain replacement screws and stand parts, including help from a technician for a free repair. If you wall-mounted the TV, you do not need to stop using it.

MAY IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

AIR CONDITIONERS



FITNESS TRACKERS

JUNE IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

INSECT REPELLENTS

STROLLERS

PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

Top Picks for a Great Home Office

The right computer, printer, desk, and chair can turn your home workspace into a refuge. **by Melanie Pinola**

VERSATILE DESKTOP

HP Pavilion 24-ca1234
$1,070

81 OVERALL SCORE

NICE-PRICE LASER PRINTER

Canon ImageClass MF451dw
$200

71 OVERALL SCORE

ERGONOMIC OFFICE CHAIR

Steelcase Series 1
$487

A **DEDICATED WORKSPACE**—whether it's in a guest bedroom or a corner of the den—can be your happy place, a go-to spot for working on personal projects, browsing the web, and connecting with friends and family. Even unpleasant tasks like paying bills can, in such a space, become a source of satisfaction as you check them off your to-do list.

But there's no point in having a desk and computer in your home unless you can actually enjoy using them.

So if your current setup is cramped or cluttered or uncomfortable, or you just find yourself avoiding that part of your home, it might be time for an upgrade—to a workstation that takes some of the discomfort out of the equation and frees you to focus on the things you really want to do.

That's where we come in. In the pages that follow, we'll point you not only to computers and printers that will truly serve your needs but also to chairs and desks that won't leave you longing for escape.

Using advice from CR's in-house ergonomics experts, Dana Keester and Paul Ritchey, we'll show you how to position those furnishings and set up your equipment for maximum comfort and better posture, too.

And we'll offer some simple hacks—from cleaning your screen to boosting your WiFi—that will help you get even more use out of, and be more productive in, your newly appointed workspace.

Ready to get started? Let's go.

Desktops for Your Desktop

A LAPTOP IS nice for life on the go, but it's often unkind to your body—leaving you hunched over, pecking away at a narrow keyboard while squinting into a compact screen.

You can fix that to some degree by retrofitting a laptop with accessories like a 27-inch monitor, a full-sized keyboard, and a mouse. But a tried-and-true desktop can get you those things and more—more power and storage space, more ports to connect accessories, and a built-in DVD drive—for roughly the same price as a laptop.

Desktop computers come in two main flavors: the all-in-one and the traditional "tower," which typically sits under your desk. All-in-ones give you the complete package. It's a computer and monitor merged into one unit, plus a keyboard and mouse. This makes them easy to shop for and set up—just place the unit on the desk, plug it in, and you're ready to go.

Traditional desktops tend to be more versatile, offering six or more USB ports (handy for connecting monitor, keyboard, and other accessories), extras like a DVD or Blu-ray drive and a memory card slot, and the ability to add or swap out hardware with ease. Traditional desktops don't come with a monitor, so you'll have to supply one yourself, and perhaps a keyboard and mouse as well. If you already own those, you can save some money this way. But even after adding in the cost of accessories, you can spend less than you would on a premium laptop.

Plus, you get more say in the final product with a traditional desktop. If you want an ergonomic keyboard to minimize wrist strain, go for it. An extra-large monitor? Sure, why not? A 24- to 28-inch screen will suffice for most people, but if you have the budget and space to spare, there are good reasons to go bigger: More real estate makes for pleasant video streaming and a much easier time reviewing documents side by side.

In short, if you want a space-saving PC that's easy to set up, an all-in-one is your best bet. If you already have a monitor or want more flexibility in choosing your accessories, a traditional desktop is the wiser choice; it may even cost less than an all-in-one, depending on the peripherals you select.

There's no need to spring for high-end specs unless you truly need them for things like video editing. An Intel Core i5 processor or the equally powerful AMD Ryzen 5 will serve you just fine. Add 8 gigabytes of memory and a 256-gigabyte storage drive and you're ready to tackle most tasks. The ratings chart on page 25 can help

COMPACT DESKTOP COMPUTER

Apple Mac Mini M2 Chip

$600

70 OVERALL SCORE

DESKTOP COMPUTER "TOWER"

Lenovo IdeaCentre 5

$1,100

81 OVERALL SCORE

Add a monitor and an ergonomic keyboard for a custom setup.

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: AARON DYER, PROP STYLING: SARAAH VASIL; APPLE; LENOVO

you quickly narrow the selection. It features 19 models ranging in price from $400 to $1,500.

A Printer to Count On

PRINTER INK IS notoriously expensive. On a per-ounce basis, even the cheapest ink cartridge costs five times as much as Dom Pérignon champagne—if you can find the right cartridge in a pinch when yours runs out.

But there's a good alternative: Our testers say a black-and-white laser printer makes more sense than a cheap inkjet printer for most people, because laser printers produce high-quality text at high speeds, don't saddle you with costly ink maintenance cycles, and tend to be more reliable. (An all-in-one model—some available for under $200—can scan and make copies, too.)

Today's printers can also connect wirelessly to a WiFi network, letting you print documents from a computer, phone, or tablet located in any room in your home. That means you can tuck the printer out of the way and still have it spit out tickets, maps, and recipes as you need them.

So far, so good. What about printing in color? You can outsource occasional jobs to Staples or FedEx Office, or if you print in color more frequently, a color inkjet makes more sense than a color laser, which is better suited for businesses. Tank inkjet printers in particular, such as the $230 Epson EcoTank ET-2800, can save you money in the long run. These models use reservoirs that can be refilled with inexpensive bottles of ink instead of pricey cartridges. The printers cost more upfront, but the ink will run you under $10 a year rather than $70 or more for cartridges, according to our testing.

The Right Desk and Chair

IT PAYS TO put serious thought into where and how you'll be sitting. Your wrists and back will thank you for it! Here—and in the illustration on the facing page—are pro tips from CR's in-house ergonomics experts.

Make sure your desk is wide and deep enough to properly position your computer equipment and essentials such as a notepad and perhaps a mood-boosting plant. Just keep in mind that the wider your desk, the more opportunity for clutter creep.

When it comes to depth, you want to be able to stretch out your arm toward the back of the desk and still have a few inches of clearance, because your monitor should be placed about an arm's length away. A shallow desk might be suitable for just a laptop.

Most desks have a fixed height of 28 to 30 inches. This may work well for people 5 foot, 8 inches to 5 foot, 10 inches; everyone else probably needs to adjust the height of their chair and monitor, add a keyboard and mouse tray, or consider an adjustable sit/stand desk to achieve the proper fit. The top of the monitor should be at eye level or slightly below, or even lower if you wear glasses with bifocal or progressive lenses. And the keyboard and mouse should be low enough so that your wrists and hands are at or below the height of your elbows when you're typing.

Adjustability is key for your chair—the more it adapts to fit your torso and limbs, the better off you'll be, says Paul Ritchey, a certified professional ergonomist with CR's Consumer Experience & Usability Research team. Beyond seat height, you might need to adjust the armrests so that they support your forearms with your shoulders relaxed, the lumbar support so that it's positioned to help maintain the natural curvature of your spine, and the seat depth to maintain an inch or two of space between the back of your knees and the edge of your seat. So look for a chair that allows for those adjustments.

Materials are another important factor when chair shopping: A breathable fabric or mesh is best; leather, synthetic leather, and plastic are not ideal for long days in the saddle.

LOW-COST LASER PRINTER
Brother HL-L2390DW
$160

67
OVERALL SCORE

THRIFTY INKJET PRINTER
Epson EcoTank ET-2800
$230

49
OVERALL SCORE

Models like these keep toner and ink costs low.

COMFORTABLE OFFICE CHAIR
Hon Ignition 2.0
$343

PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: CONSUMER REPORTS (2); HON

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

A COMFORTABLE RETREAT

Whether your priority is comfort or productivity, your office should be tailored to you. Here are basic guidelines for positioning and adjusting your computer, desk, and chair—and, if necessary, fine-tuning with accessories like a wrist support, footrest, or lumbar support pillow.

WRISTS

Hands and fingers should be in line with your forearms, not angled up or down or left or right. A keyboard wrist rest can help reduce strain (but should actually support the heel of your palm, not your wrist).

ARMS

When typing, wrists and hands should be at or below the height of your elbows. (If your desk is too high for that, raise your chair or get an under-desk keyboard tray.) Armrests should support your forearms while your shoulders are relaxed and elbows are at your sides.

BACK

The chair's lumbar support should be positioned to maintain the natural curvature of your lower spine. If your chair lacks adjustable lumbar support, consider getting a lumbar support pillow (from $20).

EYES

The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level (or lower if you wear glasses with bifocal or progressive lenses). The monitor should be about an arm's length away.

LEGS AND FEET

You want an inch or two of space between the back of your knees and the front of your seat. (If your seat is too long for that, try layering towels over the backrest.) Feet should rest flat on the floor or, if necessary, on a footrest or stool.

ILLUSTRATION: T.M. DETWILER

4 OFFICE EXTRAS YOU'LL LOVE

You really don't have to spend a lot to significantly improve your home workspace. Here are a few simple ways to make your setup more pleasant and productive for less than $25.

APC Essential SurgeArrest PE66 6-Outlet Surge Protector
$12

Monoprice Mobile Series USB-C to 4-Port USB 3.0 Hub
$15

TP-Link AC750 WiFi Range Extender
$23

1. Add More Outlets

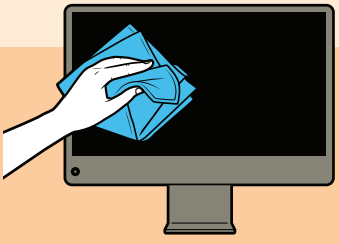
Keeping all those gadgets powered up can be a challenge in a space with few outlets. A low-cost power strip with surge protection ($10 to $20) solves that problem—and protects the devices from power fluctuations caused by a lightning strike or even turning on your vacuum.

2. Add More Ports

These days, it's easy to run out of computer ports for your peripherals. But a relatively inexpensive multi-port hub can add USB ports, plus a memory card reader, USB-to-HDMI adapter (for connecting a monitor), and an Ethernet port (a wired connection to your router can speed up your internet). A basic USB hub at online retailers like Monoprice costs around $15.

3. Boost the WiFi Signal

Need help with an internet dead spot? A palm-sized, $23 WiFi range extender can push the signal from your router deeper into your home. Simply plug it into an outlet midway between the router and the room where you want coverage.



4. Clean Your Screen

No need to buy a $20 kit. A soft microfiber cloth, the kind you use to clean eyeglasses, will do. For stubborn residue, dampen the cloth slightly with distilled water and gently wipe the screen. Incidentally, this is a great way to clean your flat-screen TV, too.

PHOTO: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS. ILLUSTRATION: T.M. DETWILER

Ratings › **Dream Machines** Versatile, powerful, and often less costly than a laptop, these desktop computers cost $1,500 or less and are all recommended by our testers.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results				Features					
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Performance	Versatility	Ergonomics	Display	Display size (in.)	Processor	Memory (GB)	Storage (GB)	Blu-ray or DVD	Memory-card reader
FULL-SIZED DESKTOPS														
✓ **Lenovo** IdeaCentre 5	81	$1,100	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i5	16	1,256	–	
$ **HP** Pavilion TP01-3003w	79	$650	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i5	12	512	–	●
✓ **Dell** XPS 8950-7518BLK	79	$1,150	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i7	32	1,512	–	●
✓ **HP** Envy TE01-3254	78	$970	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i7	16	1,000	–	●
✓ **Dell** Inspiron i3910	77	$930	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i7	16	512	D	●
✓ **Asus** S501MD-SB703	76	$930	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i7	8	512	D	
COMPACT DESKTOPS														
$ **Lenovo** IdeaCentre Mini 5i Desktop	75	$400	●	●	⏫	●	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i5	12	256	–	
$ **Acer** Aspire XC-1660G-UW93	73	$430	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	NA	Intel Core i5	8	512	D	
✓ **Apple** Mac Mini (M2, 8Core, 256GB, 8GB)	70	$600	⏫	⏫	⏫	●	●	NA	NA	Apple M2 (8 core) 3.5GHz	8	256	–	
✓ **MSI** Pro DP21 Desktop	69	$660	●	●	⏫	●	●	NA	NA	Intel Core i7	16	500	–	
ALL-IN-ONE DESKTOPS														
✓ **HP** Pavilion 31.5	82	$1,500	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	31.5	Intel Core i7	16	1,000	–	●
✓ **Dell** Inspiron i7710	81	$1,400	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	27.0	Intel Core i7	16	1,000	–	●
✓ **HP** Pavilion 24-ca1234	81	$1,070	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	23.8	Intel Core i5	12	1,000	–	
✓ **Asus** Zen AiO M5401WYA-DH704T	81	$1,150	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	23.8	AMD Ryzen 7 5825U 2GHz	16	512	–	
✓ **Apple** 27-inch iMac (256GB, Core i5, 2020)	80	$1,500	⏫	⏫	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	27.0	Intel Core i5	8	256	–	●
✓ **Apple** 24-inch iMac (M1 Chip)	77	$1,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	24.0	Apple Processor M1 3.19GHz	8	256	–	
$ **Dell** Inspiron 5415-A655BLK	77	$800	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	23.8	AMD Ryzen 5 5625U 2.3GHz	8	512	–	●
$ **Acer** Aspire C24-1700-UA91	76	$650	●	●	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	23.8	Intel Core i3	8	512	–	
$ **Lenovo** IdeaCentre 3i 22	75	$530	●	●	⏫	●	⏫	⏫	23.8	Intel Pentium Gold 8505 1.2GHz	8	256	–	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/computers.

HOW WE TEST: **Overall Score** combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** is based on estimated problem rates for newly purchased desktop computers, adjusted for service contract status and usage per week, within the first three years of ownership. **Owner satisfaction** scores are based on the proportion of members who are extremely likely to recommend their desktop computer brand to their friends and family. **Performance** reflects speed while running productivity applications, multimedia applications, and 3D games. **Versatility** includes hardware, such as memory-card slots and A/V connections; software, such as security programs; and tech support and warranty provisions. **Ergonomics** represents the quality of the keyboard and pointing device, and accessibility of features. For all-in-ones, **display** covers display size, clarity, color, contrast, brightness, and glare. **Price** is approximate retail.

Ratings › **Fine Print** There's nothing worse than a printer that puts you deep in the red. The ink and toner cost estimates for these all-in-one models—all priced at $350 or less—do not exceed $60 a year.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Text quality	Text speed	Graphics quality	Photo quality	Maintenance ink use	Scan quality	Ink cost/year ($)	Text speed (ppm)	Text cost (cents)	Built-in fax
ALL-IN-ONE BLACK-AND-WHITE LASER PRINTERS														
✓ **Canon** ImageClass MF269dw	73	$330	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	5	27.3	1.1	●
$ **Canon** ImageClass MF264dw	71	$210	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	13	20.0	3.3	
$ **Canon** ImageClass MF451dw	71	$200	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	▲	14	20.0	3.6	
Brother MFC-L2690DW	69	$170	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	15	16.7	3.8	●
Brother HL-L2395DW	68	$220	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	15	18.8	3.7	
Brother HL-L2390DW	67	$160	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	17	16.7	4.4	
Brother MFC-L2750DW	67	$300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▼	NA	▲▲	●	11	14.3	2.8	●
Brother MFC-L2720DW	65	$230	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	11	18.8	2.7	●
Brother MFC-L2710DW	65	$250	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	9	16.7	2.2	●
HP LaserJet MFP M234sdw	65	$235	▲	▲	▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	17	20.0	4.2	
Canon ImageClass MF455dw	64	$280	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▼	NA	▲▲	▲	14	11.1	3.6	
Canon ImageClass MF236n	64	$210	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	▲	12	17.6	3.1	●
Brother DCP-L2550DW	63	$200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	14	17.6	3.6	
HP LaserJet Pro M227fdw	62	$250	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	12	18.8	2.9	●
Xerox B235/DNI	62	$300	–	–	▲▲	●	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	16	15.0	4.1	●
Xerox B225/DNI	62	$250	–	–	▲▲	●	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	16	15.0	4.1	●
Lexmark MB2236adw	61	$280	–	–	▲▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	15	20.0	3.8	●
HP LaserJet Pro M28W	60	$140	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	22	14.3	5.7	
HP LaserJet Pro M29W	60	$150	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	22	14.3	5.7	
HP LaserJet MFP M140we	60	$130	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▼▼	NA	▲▲	●	19	14.3	4.8	
HP LaserJet MFP M139we	60	$160	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▼	NA	▲▲	●	19	12.5	4.8	
Canon ImageClass MF3010 VP	59	$130	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▼	NA	▲▲	●	18	13.6	4.4	
Lexmark MB2236i	57	$315	–	–	▲	▲	▼	NA	▲▲	●	15	18.8	3.8	

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Text quality	Text speed	Graphics quality	Photo quality	Maintenance ink use	Scan quality	Ink cost/year ($)	Text speed (ppm)	Text cost (cents)	Built-in fax
ALL-IN-ONE INKJET PRINTERS														
$ **Brother** MFC-J1010DW	54	$100									68	14.3	8.1	●
Epson EcoTank ET-3830	53	$330							NA		5	12.0	0.3	
Epson EcoTank ET-2850	50	$230							NA		5	9.7	0.3	
HP Smart Tank 6001	50	$260	–	–					NA		4	9.1	0.3	
Epson EcoTank ET-2400	50	$180							NA		5	8.8	0.3	
Epson EcoTank ET-2800	49	$230							NA		5	8.6	0.3	
Epson WorkForce Pro WF-4740	48	$300									43	12.5	2.2	●
Canon Pixma MG3620	47	$60									53	8.8	7.5	
Epson EcoTank ET-4800	46	$250							NA		5	8.6	0.3	●
Epson WorkForce ST-C2100 Supertank	46	$290							NA		5	3.6	0.3	
Brother MFC-J5330DW	45	$255									36	17.6	2.0	●
Epson WorkForce Pro WF-4830	44	$200									63	17.6	5.3	●
Canon Pixma MG2522	41	$40									64	7.0	10.3	
Canon MegaTank Pixma G2260	41	$160							NA		4	9.7	0.3	
Canon Maxify MB5120	39	$280									53	20.0	1.7	●
Brother MFC-J5845DW	39	$350									30	18.8	2.1	●
Canon MegaTank Pixma G3260	39	$180							NA		4	10.0	0.3	
Canon MegaTank Pixma G7020	38	$350							NA		4	8.1	0.3	●
Canon MegaTank Pixma G6020	37	$280							NA		4	9.7	0.3	
Epson Expression Home XP-440	31	$105									52	7.5	5.8	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/printers.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that newly purchased models from a given brand will develop problems or break within the first four years. Findings are based on CR's 2019 Summer and 2020 and 2021 Fall Quarterly Surveys. **Owner satisfaction** reflects the proportion of CR members who are extremely likely to recommend the printer they bought. In cases where we have insufficient survey data to provide a brand-level rating, indicated by a gray dash (–), we assume the model has average reliability and satisfaction. **Text quality** assesses clarity and crispness of black text. **Text speed** reflects how quickly the model can print text on five plain letter-sized pages. **Graphics quality** assesses the appearance of color graphics produced by the printer, or black-and-white graphics for black-and-white lasers. **Photo quality** reflects a photo's appearance. **Maintenance ink use** reflects the amount of extra ink used by an inkjet printer to maintain its print heads. **Ink cost/year ($)** is the estimated cost (in dollars) for ink or toner in a year of typical use, based on our tests and how members told us they print. **Text speed (ppm)** is our measure of how fast the printer can print pages of monochrome text. **Text cost (cents)** is the ink-related cost of one page of black text. **Price** is approximate retail.

save big at home

and waste less

Keep more of your money—more than $6,500—and do your part for the environment by following the simple tips in our room-by-room (plus yard) guide.

by **Janet Siroto**
illustrations by **Eiko Ojala**

Your home just seems to eat money sometimes, doesn't it? From high cooling and heating costs to food that spoils before you can enjoy it, it's easy to feel like your monthly budget is disappearing before your eyes. But there are all sorts of tricks and smart new products that can help you save—and, while you're at it, live more sustainably.

In fact, the 92 ideas on the next 14 pages can save you more than $6,500 in just one year. That could go a long way toward offsetting the higher energy expenses many Americans have had to adjust to: In a November 2022 nationally representative survey of 2,185 U.S. adults, about half of respondents said that their monthly heating (51 percent) and cooling (50 percent) bills have gone up compared with the amount they spent the year before. Two-thirds of Americans in that survey told us they have taken some action to reduce their heating or cooling bills. It's a great time to upgrade to more energy-efficient and water-saving products at home because the money-saving tax credits from the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 start to kick in this year.

More good news: You don't have to spend to save. Whether it's adjusting your thermostat or keeping your appliances in top shape, many of these thrifty strategies don't cost a thing or take much effort.

Read on for the simple steps to help you save—and live more sustainably in the process.

THREE EASY WAYS TO SAVE $1,000 THIS YEAR

$500	+	**$400**	+	**$100**	=	**$1,000**
Tweak your laundry habits		Eat less meat and more healthy veggies		Plug up small leaks		Total

all around the house

POTENTIAL SAVINGS

$2,700

SAVE

30%

ON YOUR ENERGY BILLS

The average household can save on heating and cooling costs with strategic moves, such as proper equipment maintenance and thermostat settings, according to the Department of Energy.

Try a smart thermostat to cut heating and cooling costs

▶ **SAVE $50 OR MORE A YEAR**

Don't let your air conditioning go on automatic pilot: Take control with a WiFi-enabled smart thermostat like the ones listed at right. They're easy to install and let you manage your central A/C via smartphone or tablet. (Other products, not rated by CR, work on window units.) Plus, most of these thermostats "learn" your family's daily routines. Why cool rooms when you're out all day and the house is empty? The average Energy Star certified smart thermostat can save about 8 percent of your annual heating and cooling bills, putting $50 or more back in your pocket.

SMART THERMOSTATS

Google Nest Learning Thermostat $250 *(shown)*	83
Honeywell Home T9 RCHT9510WF Thermostat $170	73
Ecobee Smart With Voice Control EB-STATe5-01 $250	73

Help your water heater stay warm

▶ **SAVE UP TO $96 A YEAR**

Water heating is typically the second-largest energy expense in a home, averaging as much as $600 each year. To manage costs, consider insulating your tank water heater: You could lower standby heat loss by up to 45 percent and slash up to 16 percent off your bill, saving as much as $96 annually. It's an easy fix, using precut "jackets" or blankets that cost around $20 at home centers. But to prevent the wiring from overheating, don't set the temperature above 130° F. Bonus: Dialing down your tank's heat setting is another way to lower your energy bill, according to the Department of Energy.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIMONE MASSONI

Use fans

▸ SAVE UP TO $87 PER SEASON

To save energy and cash, go old school instead of flicking on the A/C. Ceiling fans are much more energy-efficient, using just 10 percent of the electricity that air conditioners do. In fact, you could leave a fan running for a full 24 hours and still use less energy than about 2½ hours of air conditioning. If you normally use your A/C for four to six months of the year, pulling the plug on running it could cut up to $87, or 12 percent of your energy costs, which average $121 a month countrywide.

STAY COOL AND SAVE CASH

▸ SAVE ABOUT $152 A YEAR

Three out of 4 U.S. homes have an air conditioner, and these units use about 6 percent of all the electricity created across America. A/Cs also release about 117 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. Here are some tips to help you live a little more lightly with your A/C on.

Opt for a high-efficiency model

Along with making other stay-cool moves, it could help you slash your A/C energy use by 20 to 50 percent. When you trade a standard unit for an Energy Star certified one, you can reap about $540 in savings over the 15- to 20-year life of the appliance (about $27 to $36 per year). You may be able to get a rebate on a new energy-efficient A/C, too: Check at energystar.gov/rebate-finder. And if your old one still works, consider giving it to a friend or relative who doesn't have one.

ENERGY STAR CERTIFIED AIR CONDITIONERS

✓ **LG LW8022IVSM** $420 *(shown)*	82
✓ **Frigidaire Gallery GHWQ103WC1** $530	89

Set your thermostat a little higher than your usual comfort zone

For every degree you set your thermostat above 72° F, you'll save 3 percent on your utility bill. On an average monthly bill of $122, that would snip off $43.92 per year. Also be sure to raise the temperature when you're sleeping or away from home.

Clean or replace filters monthly

Doing this during the cooling season will help your A/C run efficiently.

Close the shades during the day

You can keep your home cooler by blocking the sun's heat with tightly installed shades. About 76 percent of the sunlight that comes in through standard double-pane windows becomes heat during the warmer months, potentially making your home too toasty. Insulated cellular shades, also known as accordion or honeycomb shades, are composed of fabric "cells" that collapse and expand when raised and lowered. These window coverings can block solar heat, and they also save you about 10 percent on heating costs, or $72 per year on a very modest bill of $60 per month.

A CR READER'S TIP

USE A WATER HEATER TIMER. I installed a timer for our electric hot water heater (from $69 for a manual model to $164 for a digital model at Amazon) over 15 years ago and have been saving money on electricity ever since. It comes on at 5 a.m. and goes off at 8 p.m., and supplies us with plenty of hot water. It has a manual on/off switch, so when we leave for a few days, I just turn it off. It can be set for any day or night schedule, too. I immediately saw a decrease in my electric bill after installation. ***–Anthony Albertini, Massachusetts***

A CR READER'S TIP

CUT COSTS WITH TOWER FANS. I purchased two cooling towers for the rooms where I spend the most time: the bedroom and the family room/kitchen area. They offer the choice of cooling and oscillating, are equipped with timers (perfect for bedtime), and cost $50 apiece. I've been able to keep the thermostat higher by several degrees as a result and have saved more than quintuple my original investment of $100. ***–Jennifer Stenkamp, Oregon***

Entertain yourself economically

When buying new audio/video equipment, look for Energy Star certification. These components can be up to 70 percent more efficient than conventional models. Running a TV alone isn't usually a huge expense—one study found the worst power-guzzler to be a 10-year-old 65-incher, at about $81 a year—but when you consider all the devices many of us use (soundbars, receivers, etc.), it can add up to a decent energy suck and expense.

TAME YOUR TECH BUDGET

▸ **SAVE $480 OR MORE**

1 / Extend the life of your phone

Here's an easy way to avoid paying for a pricey new phone and creating waste: Replace your current phone's battery. At the Apple Store, the out-of-warranty cost for this repair is $49 to $99, depending on the phone model. Because even the lowest-priced iPhone SE costs $429, you could save $330 or more. Best Buy's Geek Squad will provide the service on Samsung Galaxy models for $70 to $80.

2 / Buy refurbished electronics

Apple, Dell, and Samsung sell refurbished tech (such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets). This is a great way to save money, extend the life of a device, and keep it out of a landfill. On Apple's website, for example, you can purchase a refurbished 13.3-inch MacBook Air for $849, saving at least $150 by not buying a new Air ($999 and up). Interested in headphones or speakers? Bose and Sonos also have programs. But first:

▸ ***Look for "certified pre-owned" products*** with a new rechargeable battery and all the standard accessories.

▸ ***Get a warranty.*** You have no protection without one.

▸ ***Ask about the return policy.*** At least a month is best (leaving time for problems to arise).

3 / Donate used tech

If your old gadget still works—and often if it doesn't—a charity or nonprofit will probably take it. Check local recreation centers and organizations for older people first, and get a receipt so that you can deduct your donation on next year's tax return. Or try:

▸ ***Dell Reconnect,*** a partnership with Goodwill that accepts computers and "just about anything that can be connected to a computer," according to the website. You can drop off used devices at Goodwill locations around the country. Find one at dellreconnect.com.

▸ ***The World Computer Exchange,*** which aims to close the digital divide in developing countries and to promote the reuse and recycling of electronics. It provides used computers and many other types of gadgets to communities worldwide. Go to worldcomputerexchange.org.

Amp up insulation

▶ **SAVE $220 OR MORE**

The average homeowner can slash energy costs by 11 percent if they fill cracks and add insulation to attics, floors over crawl spaces, and any basement rim joists within reach, according to the EPA. That means you could save about $220 per year on a typical energy bill of $2,000 (and qualify for a federal tax credit of up to 30 percent of costs). When shopping for insulation, the higher the R-value, the better its thermal performance. (Search "EPA's recommended home insulation R-values" for the recommended R-value where you live.)

Prep for winter this summer

▶ **SAVE UP TO $300 A YEAR**

Drafty old windows let cold air in and warm air out as temperatures dip. Play defense now, and consider adding low-emissivity (low-E) storm window inserts; their thermally efficient coating helps control heat transfer. Costing between $60 and $200 each, they pop into place for a simple DIY job. The payoff: lowering your energy cost by 10 to 30 percent, or up to $300 on $1,000 annually. For rebates on energy-efficient replacement windows, check energystar.gov/rebate-finder.

Consider a heat pump

▶ **SAVE UP TO $948 A YEAR**

The typical American household spends an estimated $2,000 per year on utility bills, and heating and cooling our homes accounts for a big bite of that. For heating with gas, last winter's costs are estimated at $931; for electric heat, $1,359; for oil, about $2,354.

To shrink that bill, now is a great time to switch to a heat pump. The most common type, called an air-source heat pump, absorbs heat from the air, shifting it indoors or outdoors, depending on the season.

Heat pumps are a significant investment, costing, on average, $5,895. But the latest systems can save up to $948 on energy bills per year compared with oil heating and $459 per year vs. electric baseboard and radiant floor heating. Plus, federal tax credits and state rebates make investing in a system now more affordable than ever.

Try smart plugs

These small, budget-friendly devices plug into wall sockets and work via a smartphone app, making it easy to remotely control and automate lights, fans, coffee makers, electronics, and more. Some smart plugs also monitor energy use, so you can figure out which devices in your home guzzle energy. (A CR writer's recent home test found that a space heater consumed 2.65 kilowatt-hours, or about 35 cents, in one day.) Tip: Make sure the plug can handle the wattage of the device you use it on so it's not overloaded.

SMART PLUGS

TP-Link Kasa Smart Wi-Fi Plug Slim EP25 $45 for 4 *(shown)*

APP EASE OF USE
5/5

DEVICE EASE OF USE
5/5

GE Cync Indoor Smart Plug CPLGSTDBLW1 $15

APP EASE OF USE
4/5

DEVICE EASE OF USE
4/5

An Easy Way to Give Away Old Furniture

JOANNE CHEN
Deputy Editor, Home

My husband and I recently revamped our son's room, which left us with a few pieces of worn furniture we no longer needed. The stuff wasn't good enough for a nearby charitable thrift shop, the local Goodwill doesn't take furniture, and a junk pickup service (which would then donate any items it could) wanted to charge us $258 for the job, which was more than we wanted to spend. I decided to try our neighborhood Buy Nothing Facebook group—part of the Buy Nothing Project, a community-building organization that invites participants to post items they'd like to give away or ask for items they need—all free.

We posted my son's dresser to the group, documenting its dents and scratches. That evening we messaged with the person who replied first. She and her husband came by with a luggage cart the next day and rolled the dresser away. I plan to give away the other pieces soon, and I'm grateful that our furniture will go to new homes instead of a landfill.

SAVE

$198

EAT MORE RICE

By replacing potatoes with rice three times a week, a family of four would be $197.81 richer by year's end. Just add a stir-fry, curry, beans, or any protein to round out your meal.

RICE COOKER

✓ **Hamilton Beach Cooker and Steamer 37519** $35

70

in the kitchen

POTENTIAL SAVINGS

$3,200

Conserve energy in two easy ways

By shifting your habits slightly, you can save power plus money in the kitchen. Try these tips.

- **Use the microwave instead of the oven** when possible; it draws up to 80 percent less energy. (No preheating required, and it won't heat up your kitchen on a hot day.) Or a toaster oven could use up to half the energy of a full-sized oven to cook the same meal.
- **Always leave a lever faucet in the cold position** when using small amounts of water. Otherwise, you are triggering water to be heated on reserve when it might not be needed.

Eat less meat

▸ **SAVE OVER $900 A YEAR**

Ever wonder how much you could save if you stopped eating meat for a year? It could cut your grocery bill by a third, or almost a cool thousand bucks, according to a 2021 Oxford University study citing 2017 data. Plus, you would lower your carbon footprint. Not ready to go fully meat-free? Eating more veggies and less meat or poultry—a flexitarian diet—can also help lower your food spending by 14 percent, or about $380 a year.

Meatless alternatives can cost more. At Walmart, we found ground beef recently for $4.78 a pound, Gardein plant-based "ground beef" cost $5.72 a pound, while the Impossible Foods version was $7.95 per pound. But try cooking with tofu ($2.02 per pound) and you'll actually save. For inspiration, put the phrase "meatless Monday" into your search engine, and pick some recipes that catch your eye.

Cultivate a mini-garden

Buying fresh herbs (around $2 a bunch) and microgreens (about $4) weekly can really add up. But you can shrink your grocery bill by nurturing them from seed on a sunny windowsill using space-saving kits ($15 and up online).

Rev up efficiency on ranges and refrigerators

▸ **SAVE AT LEAST $22 A YEAR**

Your range and refrigerator are kitchen workhorses. If yours need replacing, consider going

with new, energy-efficient models. Energy Star certified fridges, for example, are about 9 percent more efficient than those that meet the minimum standard and can save you over $260 during a 12-year lifetime.

Here's how to use your appliances more efficiently.

- **Do a gasket check on your fridge.** Take a dollar bill and close the refrigerator door on it, half in, half out, to check the seal; repeat at various spots. If it pulls out easily, you may want to replace the gaskets to make sure your fridge stays cool.
- **Set your refrigerator fresh food compartment at 37° F** to save energy and help keep food fresh as long as possible, and set your freezer at 0° F to keep foods thoroughly frozen.
- **Defrost manual-defrost fridges and freezers regularly.** When frost builds up past ¼ inch, the unit becomes less efficient.
- **Check the flame on your range's gas burners.** The color blue is a good sign, but yellow means the fuel is burning inefficiently and you may need an adjustment.
- **When cooking, don't open the oven door.** Instead, look through the glass to check on your dish. Opening the door lets heat escape, forcing the oven to fire up again to compensate.

ORGANIZE YOUR FRIDGE, SAVE FOOD (& CASH)

▸ **SAVE UP TO $1,500 A YEAR**

The average family of four loses $1,500 in uneaten food each year, according to the EPA. And just think of the water, fertilizer, energy, and other resources that went into producing those groceries. Here's how to do a better job of using up what you buy.

Store produce properly

Anything that might wilt goes in the high-humidity fridge drawer; most fruits, peppers, and items that could rot go in the low-humidity drawer to extend their life.

Wash fruit correctly

That means washing just before eating for fruits such as cherries, berries, and grapes; otherwise, they can get moldy.

Separate the smart way

Store apples, avocados, bananas, pears, and stone fruits separately. They emit ethylene gas as they ripen, making other nearby produce ripen more quickly and even spoil.

Label leftovers

Note what they are and the date, then stack them (ideally in clear containers). If three or four days pass and they haven't been eaten, pop them into the freezer until you need them.

Freeze fruits and veggies that will otherwise spoil

Store in made-for-freezer packaging, such as plastic zip-top bags, and squeeze out as much air as possible. Then add frozen produce to smoothies and stews.

Go low for meat

The bottom shelf of the refrigerator is the chilliest, perfect for keeping meat, poultry, and seafood fresh.

Don't trust the door for dairy

The compartment inside the door is the warmest spot in the fridge. Even if it has a shelf to cradle a carton, stowing milk there could lead to it spoiling sooner.

Don't sweat the sell-by dates

With the exception of infant formula, date stamps on food are not required by federal law, nor do they reflect food safety. If a food's use-by date has passed, it still should be safe to eat if it has been handled properly, unless its smell, flavor, or texture seems off (a sign of spoilage). So that bag of salad past its best-by date may still be fit to eat.

A CR READER'S TIP

STORE LEFTOVERS TOGETHER. I designated one shelf in the fridge for leftovers a few years ago, and it's cut our food waste dramatically. One look at the shelf tells me if our cooking is getting too far ahead of our eating. If so, I can send something to the freezer or take a night off from the stove so we can whittle down the leftovers. —***Sara Streeter, Montana***

MAKE APPLIANCES LAST LONGER

Your refrigerator, range, and dishwasher keep your kitchen humming along—but they're expensive to repair or replace. Care for them the right way (and if you need a new one, pick a reliable, efficient model).

Range

▸ **Clean up cooktop spills ASAP.** Once they dry and harden, they can clog gas burners and might require harsh, possibly damaging scrubbing to remove from a smooth cooktop. Wipe up with paper towels and follow up with a soapy sponge as needed on gas burners. Clean electric coils with a damp cloth, and smooth cooktops with liquid cooktop cleaner and paper towels or a ceramic cooktop cleaning pad.

▸ **Put away the foil.** Do you like to line your oven bottom and racks with foil, for easier cleanup? Don't, says Ron Shimek, president of Mr. Appliance, one of the Neighborly home services companies. It can interfere with functioning and even melt in your oven.

▸ **Clean your oven, too.** De-gunk your oven regularly to get rid of grease and drips and keep it working well.

▸ **Baby your range's control panel.** Wipe it clean with a damp, lint-free cloth and dish soap, but don't get it sopping wet. Water could seep into the circuitry and damage it.

Refrigerator

▸ **Clean the coils.** On the underside or rear of your fridge, the condenser coils tend to accumulate dust, dirt, grease, and other gunk, lowering efficiency. Vacuum them with a soft brush attachment at least twice a year.

▸ **Don't pile items on top of your refrigerator.** As tempting as it may be to use it as bonus storage space, objects on top may interfere with the appliance's ability to dissipate heat.

Dishwasher

▸ **Scrape plates before loading the machine.** Don't rinse, but do scrape—bones and other hard bits of food can cause clogs.

▸ **Don't stop it midcycle.** If you forgot to add a coffee mug, wait for the next load or hand-wash it rather than causing an abrupt stop.

▸ **Clean the filter.** Discard the food that gets stuck there monthly (or more often if tableware feels gritty), so it doesn't gum up the works.

▸ **Don't ignore the door seal.** Give it a regular cleaning with a vinegar-soaked cloth to inhibit mold.

RELIABLE RANGES

Electric Smoothtop
GE Profile PSS93YPFS $1,800 *(shown above)* — 88

Electric Induction
Frigidaire Gallery GCRI3058AF $1,100 — 87

Gas
GE JGB735SPSS $800 — 75

EFFICIENT FRIDGES

French-Door
LG LRFWS2906S $1,900 *(shown at right)* — 78

Top-Freezer
LG LTCS20030S $1,005 — 76

Side-by-Side
Samsung RS27T5201SR $1,685 — 61

Bottom-Freezer
LG LRDCS2603S Refrigerator $1,600 *(shown at right)* — 81

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE

Avoid double-washing your dishes

Uh-oh … you pushed the Start button on a dishwasher full of already clean pots and plates. Again. That's why "clean/dirty" magnets ($3 and up at Amazon and other retailers) were invented. These indicate cleaning status and can help you avoid wasting energy, water, and detergent.

Snag a major appliance for less

▸ **SAVE $70 A YEAR**

Follow this advice to save.

■ ***Track down local rebates.*** You could slash your costs for a new electric cooking appliance by up to $840 (or $70 a year over its 12-year life) or possibly more via utility company incentives. Search at energystar.gov/rebate-finder.

■ ***Consider pre-owned.*** A used range or other appliance from a used-appliance or repair shop can be as much as 75 percent off retail and typically carries a 6-month warranty.

■ ***Look for open-box options.*** Returned appliances and floor models may be sold at appliance retailers at significant savings.

How to Find an Eco-Friendly Dishwasher

Many manufacturers claim their products are environmentally friendly, but what does that mean—and how can you be sure it's true? Consumer Reports' Green Choice designation helps answer those questions. Before bestowing the designation, we consider how sustainable the product is throughout its life cycle. We look at the materials used to make it, how it is manufactured, how it performs in your home, and how efficiently it can be recycled. Take dishwashers, for example. CR assesses each model's water and energy efficiency, brand reliability, weight and volume, interior materials (such as what the tub is made of), and more. We've also rated Green Choice washers (see page 40) and cars, and we will be expanding the program to more products later this year.

Café CDT845P2NS1 $1,400 **74**

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results					Features						
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Washing	Drying	Energy use	Noise	Cycle time (min.)	Ample flatware slots	Adjustable upper rack	Adjustable tines	Displays remaining time	Interior material	Self-cleaning filter	WiFi
24-INCH DISHWASHERS																
Café CDT845P2NS1	74	$1,400	!	!	⌃⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	155	●	●	●		Stainless steel		●
Samsung DW80R7061UG	72	$1,015	⌄	⌄⌄	⌃⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃	120	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel		
KitchenAid KDPM604KPS	72	$1,300	!	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	145	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel	●	
Whirlpool WDTA50SAKZ	72	$700	⌃	!	⌃	!	⌃⌃	⌃	150	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel		
Samsung DW80R7060UG	72	$820	⌄	⌄⌄	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	120	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel		
Insignia NS-DWR3SS1	71	$550	–	–	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	140	●	●	●		Stainless steel		
Samsung DW80R9950US	69	$930	⌄	⌄⌄	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	130	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel		●
Maytag MDB4949SKZ	67	$700	!	!	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	!	135	●			●	Stainless steel	●	
LG LDP6810BD	66	$800	!	!	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	180	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel		
Samsung DW80R5060US	65	$650	⌄	⌄⌄	⌃	⌃	⌃	⌃	130	●	●	●	●	Stainless steel	●	
Hisense HUI6220XCUS	63	$500	–	–	⌃	!	⌃⌃	!	170	●	●			Stainless steel		

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at **CR.org/dishwashers**.

Recycle appliances the right way

A shocking stat: About 2 million tons of discarded major appliances were added to landfills in the most recent year the EPA studied. If you have an appliance to dispose of, here's how to do it responsibly.

If it is still functional, offer it up to a local charitable organization like Habitat for Humanity or list it on a Freecycle site, Facebook Marketplace, Nextdoor, or Craigslist.

■ The Responsible Appliance Disposal program can help you locate utilities and groups that will pick up and recycle large appliances, some without charge. (Search at epa.gov.)

■ If you're replacing the appliance, ask whether the retailer delivering the new one offers a haul-away service.

■ If you're getting rid of an old refrigerator (or air conditioner), it may need special handling because of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) refrigerants, which contribute to the thinning of the earth's ozone layer. Call your town sanitation department to find out how to have it picked up.

■ If you can't give it away, you could hire a removal service. (Check its recycling practices first.) According to Angi, a home services website, junk removal costs can start at $60 and average $240.

– A dash means CR did not have enough data from member surveys to judge the reliability or owner satisfaction of Insignia and Hisense dishwashers.

in the laundry room

POTENTIAL SAVINGS
$500

Wash and dry smarter

▸ **SAVE AT LEAST $23 A YEAR**

Live greener and spend less by trying these easy tactics.

■ **Run full loads.** It may seem obvious, but given that the Energy Star program has found the average household does 300 loads of laundry a year, many of us may be guilty of doing energy-wasting mini-loads.

■ **Be stingy with detergent.** Consumer Reports' testing reveals that 1.5 ounces is plenty for an average load. Use more and you're washing money down the drain. Plus, excess detergent could leave residue on your clothes (and chemicals can escape into soil and water).

■ **Learn to love air-drying.** Estimates find that each dryer use costs 23 cents. For 300 loads a year, that's $69. Could you cut that by a third to save $23? Shake clothes out to minimize wrinkling, dry knits flat to avoid stretching, and if drying outside in the sun, turn brights and darks inside out to prevent fading. Bonus: It smells so darn good. University of Copenhagen research found that line-drying produces organic compounds we recognize from plants and perfumes and find pleasing.

■ **Select a high spin cycle (but not for delicates).** This will remove more moisture from fabrics, cutting dryer time.

■ **Opt for dryer auto cycles, not timed.** Automatic cycles use sensors to determine when items are dry, and the dryer ends the cycle—while a timed cycle can keep spinning, wasting energy.

■ **Dry heavy stuff (like towels and jeans) separately from lightweight items (such as T-shirts).** The lighter-weight items will dry faster, sparing your energy bill.

■ **Use your dryer's cool-down cycle (if it has one).** It finishes drying clothes using residual heat, economizing on energy. It also helps minimize wrinkling if clothes remain in the dryer after the cycle ends.

Extend the life of your machines

Your washer and dryer are undoubtedly household MVPs, de-staining your favorite shirt and fluffing up your softest towels. Here's how to keep these appliances in top condition.

■ **Even things up.** Make sure your washing machine is level. During the spin cycle, it can hit 1,600 rpm; if the appliance is off-kilter, that velocity can cause damage. If yours is wobbly, extend the feet individually to adjust; use

SAVE

$400+

BUST OUT OF THE HOT WATER RUT

Consumer Reports testing has shown cold water to be as effective at cleaning as warmer water. (Note that liquid detergents dissolve more easily in colder water than powder types.) Also, set your water heater to 120° F instead of 140° F; doing so may help you save over $400 per year.

LAUNDRY DETERGENT

✓ **Persil ProClean Stain Fighter** 21¢ per load

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY | CR GREEN CHOICE

A CR READER'S TIP

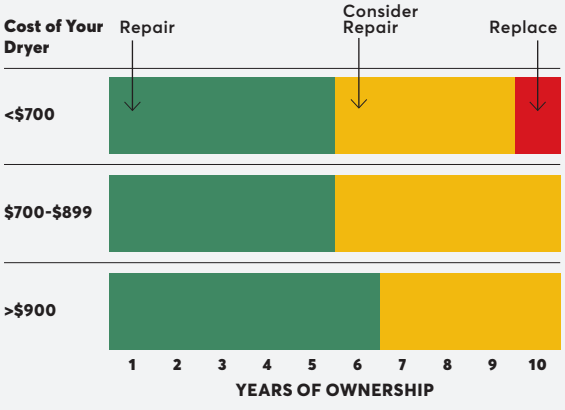
HANG AN INDOOR CLOTHESLINE. We use one very successfully, including in our basement during the winter, when indoor humidity is very low and the evaporation rate is high. Our dryer is rarely used. *—Tom & Nina Grote, Missouri*

CAN THIS WASHER/DRYER BE SAVED?

If your laundry machines aren't working, you may think you have to start shopping. But repairs can often be made for (much) less, so consider this intel from Consumer Reports' recent member surveys.

Whether you should repair or replace your electric dryer depends on how much it cost you, its age, and its potential repair cost vs. the cost of a new dryer. We've done the calculations for you in the chart below.

When to Repair Your Electric Dryer



dryers

$133-$215

MEDIAN OUT-OF-POCKET REPAIR COSTS

MOST COMMON PROBLEMS: clothes not drying, tangled or balled-up clothes, problems with the dryer's drum (rollers, belt, motor, unusual noise while operating).

washers

$155

MEDIAN OUT-OF-POCKET REPAIR COSTS

MOST COMMON PROBLEMS: tangled or balled-up clothes, odor.

a level to evaluate on all sides, then tighten the lock nuts on the feet into place.

■ **Minimize mold.** If your washer has a self-clean feature, use it as recommended. If not, run an empty load on hot with a cup of bleach (and an extra rinse cycle to remove bleach residue), then wipe down, clean, and dry the gaskets, and dry the door and detergent tray. Also, leave the door ajar on front-loaders after use (unless little kids are around) or open the lid on a top-loader to help moisture evaporate.

■ **Don't overload the tub.** To avoid overtaxing your washer, fill front-loaders to the top, with the drum lightly packed. The door should close easily. For top-loaders, fill just to the maximum fill line or up to the plastic ring.

■ **Eyeball water-intake hoses.** If they're brittle or cracking, replace them; not doing so could lead to a flood.

■ **Clean lint filters diligently.** If your dryer filter is clogged, it may run longer to dry clothes, which could wear it out faster.

■ **Swap out all accordion-style ducts for rigid metal ones.** The accordion ones can allow lint buildup, decreasing efficiency and increasing the risk of a fire.

■ **Brush well.** With a vacuum and special brush, clean the duct annually to remove lint. You may need to take it apart in sections to do so.

Time your energy use right

▶ **SAVE $21.48**

Who cares when you do your laundry? Your utility company might. Some charge more for electricity at peak hours, usually weekday working hours (check with your provider). If yours does this, you could save a bit by doing laundry and other energy-intensive chores in the evenings or on weekends. For example, PSEG Long Island in New York discounts standard rates by 40 percent during what it calls "super off-peak" hours (10 p.m. to 6 a.m. daily). If, out of six loads a week, you put two in the dryer before going to bed (after 10 p.m.), you'd save $21.48 per year, depending on the size of your dryer.

How to Find an Eco-Friendly Washer

What makes CR's Green Choice washers different from other models? Our environmental assessments include water efficiency, energy efficiency, brand reliability, gentleness, weight, and volume. Green Choice models are easier on your clothes and use fewer natural resources.

LG WM3600HWA
$800
86

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Washing performance	Energy efficiency	Water efficiency	Gentleness	Noise	Vibration	Claimed capacity (cu. ft.)	Cycle time (min.)	Energy Star certified	Dimensions, HxWxD (in.)	Auto detergent dispenser
FRONT-LOAD WASHERS															
LG WM3600HWA	86	$800	⏫	⌃	⏫	⏫	⏫	⌃	⌃	!	4.5	100	●	39x27x31	●
LG WM8100HVA	83	$1,000	⏫	⌃	⌃	⌃	⏫	⌃	⌃	⌃	5.2	95	●	41x29x32	●
Electrolux EFLS627UTT	82	$800	⌃	!	⏫	⏫	⏫	⌃	⌃	⌃	4.4	85	●	39x27x32	●
Samsung WF45R6300AW	81	$1,030	⌃	!	⏫	⏫	⏫	⌃	!	!	4.5	80	●	39x27x32	●
Electrolux ELFW7637AT	81	$1,000	⌃	!	⏫	⌃	⏫	⌃	!	⌃	4.5	85	●	38x27x32	●
Electrolux ELFW7537AW	80	$895	⌃	!	⏫	⌃	⏫	⌃	⌃	⌃	4.5	85	●	39x27x32	●
TOP-LOAD HE WASHER															
LG WT7900HBA	83	$950	⏫	⌃	⏫	⌃	⏫	!	!	⏫	5.5	70	●	45x27x30	●
LG WT7100CW	81	$650	⏫	⌃	⏫	⌃	⏫	!	!	⏫	4.5	75	●	45x27x30	●
TOP-LOAD AGITATOR WASHER															
LG WT7005CW	78	$630	–	–	⌃	⌃	⌃	!	⌃	⏫	4.3	70		45x27x29	●

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at **CR.org/washers**.

Shop even smarter

▸ SAVE UP TO $54 A YEAR

Need a new washer or dryer? Go with Energy Star certified appliances. The washers use 25 percent less energy (saving you about $38 a year) and 40 percent less water than conventional ones, and the dryers use 20 percent less energy, saving you about $16 (electric) or $5.41 (natural gas) per year. You may also be able to snag a rebate: Check at energystar.gov/rebate-finder.

The CR Recommended electric dryers shown at right earned our top score for reliability in our annual member survey.

RELIABLE ELECTRIC DRYERS

- **LG DLE7300WE** 89
  $1,049 *(shown)*
- **LG DLE7100W** 88
  $740
- **LG DLEX7900BE** 87
  $950

– A dash means CR did not have enough data from member surveys to judge the reliability or owner satisfaction of LG washers.

in the bathroom

POTENTIAL SAVINGS
$330

SAVE
$140
WITH A REALLY LOW-FLOW TOILET

Water-saving toilets aren't new, but there's room for improvement. Toilets account for close to a third of all indoor water usage. While new toilets typically use 1.28 to 1.6 gallons a flush, older models can use 6 gallons. A WaterSense-labeled toilet can cut your annual H_2O usage by 13,000 gallons.

WATERSENSE TOILETS

American Standard Champion (Home Depot) 747BA107SC.020 $250 *(shown)* — 77

Glacier Bay N2428R-DF $110 — 73

Fix household leaks

▸ **SAVE UP TO $100 A YEAR**

They siphon off 1 trillion gallons of water per year in the U.S. According to the EPA, fixing leaks can cut your water bill by 10 percent, saving up to $100 per year. To check for toilet leaks, put a few drops of blue food coloring in your toilet tank and see if, after 10 minutes, it has seeped into the bowl. These silent leaks are common and can usually be fixed by replacing the flapper or floater (available at Amazon and elsewhere, $6 and up).

Get aerated faucets and showerheads

▸ **SAVE UP TO $90 A YEAR**

Replacing old faucets and aerators (which cost just a few dollars) with WaterSense-labeled ones can save the typical household about $10 to $20 and up to 700 gallons of water annually (45 showers' worth). Do the same for showerheads and you could save more than 2,700 gallons and an extra $70 per year. Go to lookforwatersense.epa.gov/rebates to see whether you can get a rebate.

Stop faucet drips

A single leaky one can waste 3,000-plus gallons a year, or enough to take more than 180 showers. The EPA recommends Lowe's and Home Depot's online videos for the steps to fix sink and tub faucets. Also, turning off the tap when brushing teeth can save 8 gallons a day; doing the same while shaving can further slash water usage.

Save water while bathing

Showering accounts for almost 17 percent of a typical home's water usage, amounting to thousands of gallons each year, and heating the water consumes considerable energy, too. To trim your usage and save:

- **Consider a low-flow showerhead.** If your home has decent water pressure, it can provide a robust shower while typically using about 30 percent less water. Both of the CR-tested models below provide satisfying showers and get top marks for water use.
- **Hit pause.** Many showerheads allow you to pause the flow of water while lathering up, saving water without having to turn it off and on again. If you shower daily and pause a high-flow showerhead for just 1 minute in a typical shower, you'd save 900-plus gallons of water per year. No pause button on your showerhead? Consider installing a manual shutoff switch (available online) between the shower arm and showerhead.

Hopopro High Pressure Fixed Shower Head $18 — 85

Kohler Moxie BT Showerhead $70 — 77

A CR READER'S TIP

CAPTURE YOUR COLD SHOWER WATER. You know that first minute or two when the shower water is still too cold to use? Don't let it go down the drain! We save it in a bucket and then use that water for flushing the toilet (just pour it into the toilet bowl), watering plants, washing bugs off the windshield–anything other than drinking it. *–Peter Decker, North Carolina*

in the yard & garden

POTENTIAL SAVINGS

$230

Control outdoor lighting with a timer

Outdoor lighting can improve your home's security, curb appeal, and livability. But it may also hike up your electric bill if you tend to forget to turn lights off. Using a timer can make illuminating your property more manageable and less expensive. For example, Home Depot stocks wireless, weatherproof photo-sensitive timers by Woods ($11) that can seamlessly turn on outdoor lights at dusk and turn them off at dawn or can be set to turn lights off after a certain number of hours. No more accidentally leaving the patio lights on all night after a barbecue.

Smarten up your sprinklers

▸ **SAVE UP TO $150 A YEAR**

At the start of 2023, a stunning 46 percent of the lower 48 states were in drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. Now consider that residential outdoor water use accounts for almost 8 billion gallons of water every single day, mainly for landscape irrigation. Experts estimate that up to half of the H_2O is wasted because of overwatering caused by inefficient systems. One way to do better: with WaterSense-labeled irrigation controllers that hydrate plants only as needed, saving the average home up to 15,000 gallons per year vs. clock-centric controllers. That could cut the average annual outdoor water bill of $300 in half, saving up to $150 a year.

Zero in on xeriscaping

This landscaping technique aims to conserve water with soil analysis, plants adapted to low rainfall, the use of mulch, and more. David Bainbridge, a restoration ecologist and an author, used a water district grant to redo his San Diego yard and now saves about $300 per year on water bills. Check with your water district to see whether it offers grants, too.

Make friends with mulch

Want to spend less on water and weed killers for your garden? Spread mulch around plantings. It reduces evaporation from the soil, keeps the soil cool, adds nutrients, and can support beneficial microorganisms, Bainbridge says. If it's time for some new lawn equipment, consider a mulching battery lawn mower, like the CR Recommended models on the facing page. These mowers leave behind mulched grass clippings, which nourish the soil by putting nitrogen back in, reducing the amount of store-bought fertilizer you need. You'll spend less for a healthier lawn.

Switch to battery-powered yard tools

Five quick reasons to opt for rechargeable tools:
1. Their motors produce zero emissions; gas tools, by contrast, emit carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). In fact, they are dirtier than car engines.
2. They're typically more efficient than gas-powered

RELIABLE BATTERY STRING TRIMMERS

- **Makita XRU15PT** $370 *(shown)* — 92
- **Ego ST1502SA** $200 — 91
- **Kobalt (Lowe's) KST 2580-06** $250 — 90

BEST MULCHING BATTERY PUSH MOWERS

- **Ego LM 2135** $600 *(shown)* — 85
- **Ryobi RY401170VNM** $400 — 78

RELIABLE BATTERY LEAF BLOWERS

- **Makita XBU03SM1** $260 *(shown)* — 84
- **Stihl BGA 57** $220 — 83
- **Milwaukee 2724-21HD** $400 — 77

tools, so they require less energy to do the same amount of work.

3. They are usually noticeably quieter than their gas-guzzling counterparts. That can be a boon for both you and your neighbors.

4. There's no need to refuel and risk a gasoline spill, which can contaminate groundwater and aquatic systems.

5. They tend to be more reliable than gas tools, according to CR's member surveys.

Tweak your hot tub

▸ **SAVE ABOUT $80 A YEAR**

Those who own a hot tub get to relax in deliciously warm, bubbly water, but they're also hit with higher bills—to the tune of $40 a month, on average, according to Angi. Here are some ways to bring the energy cost down, according to Mike Tuttobene, vice chair of the International Hot Tub Association and vice president of sales at Waterway Plastics, a supplier to the spa industry.

- **Get a great-fitting, well-insulated cover to help lock in heat.** That will typically be a thicker one—not 6 inches, but 8 or 10 inches.
- **Lower the temperature.** If it's set at 104° F or 102° F, lower it by a degree or two.
- **Empty your spa during the winter months** if you live in a cold climate and won't be using it. You'll take your energy usage down to zero.
- **Shut off the heat in the summer.** If you live in a warm climate, you may be able to dramatically lower or turn off the heat during the hot months. Experiment to see how much you can save.

Why I Water My Yard With a Smart Hose

DAN WROCLAWSKI
Writer, Home

In-ground sprinkler systems with smart controllers can water your lawn or garden much more efficiently than a hose can, but they are expensive and can be tricky to DIY. So to water my garden beds, I tried out the Orbit B-hyve Smart Hose Watering Timer, $80, which connects to an app on your phone for programming. I hooked it up to a soaker hose that I buried under my garden beds. It automatically checks my local weather forecast, watering as needed. It skips the day's watering if rain or wind is on the horizon, minimizing water loss from evaporation. (High winds cause water to evaporate before plants can absorb it.)

Most smart hose timers use Bluetooth but require a plug-in WiFi bridge, a device to control them when your smartphone is out of range. While the Orbit app is easier to use than the physical controls on regular hose timers, it's a bit buggy and not very intuitive. Still, I found it a worthwhile way to save time and water for irrigating my garden.

A CR READER'S TIP

COLLECT WATER IN A RAIN BARREL. For at least 10 years, we have set up a rain barrel every spring and use it to fill our watering can throughout the summer. We don't use the outside tap for watering our hanging baskets and planters. *–Tom Hogenbirk, Ontario*

HOW TO

Hear Better Now

Should you opt for a traditional hearing aid? Or one of the new over-the-counter devices, which are easier to buy and may be more affordable? The expert advice here can help you decide.

BY CATHERINE ROBERTS

Have you held off on getting hearing aids because the process (multiple appointments for choosing and adjusting the device) and stiff prices (often several thousand dollars) seem daunting? We've got good news.

There's now a new category of hearing aids, and they're available over the counter. That means you no longer need to see a licensed hearing professional or have a prescription in order to purchase them. You can buy an OTC hearing aid at a store like Walgreens or Best Buy and even get one online.

The price is right, too: The new OTC hearing aids usually cost about $200 to $1,000 a pair, while prescription aids can run from about $1,000 to more than $6,000 a pair. And OTC aids may be an option for up to 90 percent of people with hearing loss—those with mild-to-moderate problems.

"Hearing technology is merging with consumer technology and bringing a lot more options than traditional hearing aids," says Vinaya Manchaiah, PhD, director of audiology at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital.

That's important, because studies show that hearing aids can improve the quality of life and stave off feelings of loneliness for those with hearing loss. The condition has also been linked to a greater likelihood of dementia, and recent evidence suggests that treating it with aids could potentially help reduce that risk.

But how do you know whether OTC devices are right for you? Can they be as effective as prescription aids? And how can you choose a hearing aid without professional help? Here's what to know.

The Evolution of OTCs

While some hearing devices have long been sold online or by mail order without a prescription, they were loosely regulated, so there were few guardrails in place to ensure that they worked. But thanks to a 2017 law designed to make hearing aids more accessible and affordable, there is now a clear set of rules for OTC aids. These rules, which went into effect in the fall of 2022, require that hearing aids sold without a prescription meet specific standards for safety and effectiveness. And they can't be sold to children.

OTC aids must also comply with certain technical requirements, including restrictions on how much they can amplify sound, which is intended to protect users from hearing damage. These restrictions, however, also make OTC aids unsuitable for people with severe hearing loss. (Signs include being unable to hear spoken words even in a quiet room or trouble hearing loud music or power tools.) That's why OTC aids are specifically intended for people with self-perceived mild-to-moderate hearing loss. (Signs include trouble hearing speech in noisy places, in groups, and during phone calls.)

Rx Aids vs. OTC

OTC and prescription aids function in essentially the same way. Both pick up sounds with tiny microphones, amplify them, and transmit them to your ear via a speaker. And they use similar technology to do this.

Perhaps the most significant difference between OTC and traditional aids isn't the technology they use but how you go about obtaining them–and in some cases, setting them up.

With prescription hearing aids, you go to a healthcare provider such as an audiologist, an otolaryngologist, or a licensed hearing aid specialist. These providers test your hearing and evaluate your needs, and help you decide on the hearing aid that might be best for you. They also program the device you select so it's set up for your specific hearing

Try This Quick Test

THE HEARING HANDICAP INVENTORY, developed by Barbara Weinstein, PhD, an audiologist who's a professor at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City, helps assess auditory wellness, or the extent to which hearing loss affects people emotionally and socially. One reason it's useful: Someone without measurable hearing loss may still struggle to hear in certain circumstances.

DIRECTIONS: Check yes, sometimes, or no for each question (don't skip any of them), then add up your score. If you score Good or Excellent, you may not need hearing aids. People who score Fair and have ruled out other possible causes of hearing loss are good candidates for OTC aids. If you scored Poor or Very Poor, it's worth seeking help from a hearing professional.

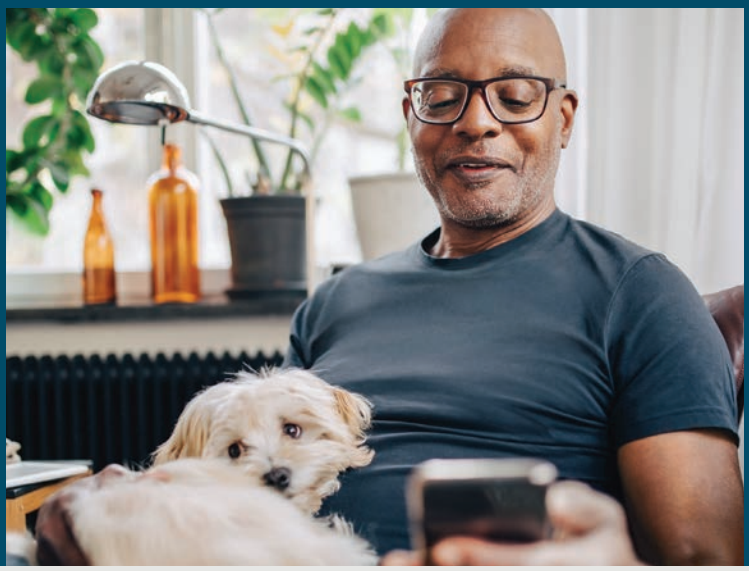
SCORING KEY

0–6	8–14	16–40
Good or Excellent	Fair	Poor or Very Poor

	YES (4 pts.)	SOMETIMES (2 pts.)	NO (0 pts.)
Does a hearing problem cause you to be embarrassed when meeting new people?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you to feel frustrated when talking to members of your family?	○	○	○
Do you have difficulty hearing when someone speaks in a whisper?	○	○	○
Do you feel handicapped by a hearing problem?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you to attend religious services less often than you would like?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you to have arguments with family members?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when listening to TV or radio?	○	○	○
Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits or hampers your personal or social life?	○	○	○
Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when in a restaurant with relatives or friends?	○	○	○
		TOTAL SCORE =	○

The 4 Types of Hearing Helpers

HEARING AIDS ARE now divided into two key categories: prescription and over the counter. OTCs can be further divided into self-fitting and preset types. You may also come across devices known as personal sound amplification products (PSAPs) and "hearables" in retail stores and online. These aren't considered hearing aids but could be helpful in some instances. Check this chart for the lowdown on each of these kinds of hearing devices.



OTC Hearing Aid Options

Self-Fitting

WHERE TO BUY THEM In a retail setting such as a drugstore or electronics store, or online.

PROS Currently, self-fitting hearing aids must be cleared as both safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration. Because they're far more customizable than preset OTC hearing aids, they may suit your specific hearing needs better. Self-fitting aids can be significantly less expensive than prescription hearing aids. (They start at about $699 per device.)

CONS While you'll probably be guided by an app to set up your aids, the self-fitting process might be challenging for some people, particularly those who are less technologically inclined.

Preset

WHERE TO BUY THEM In a retail setting such as a drugstore or electronics store, or online.

PROS With prices starting at about $199 per device, some of these are less expensive than many of the self-fitting OTC and prescription options. Because these types of aids usually come with just a handful of preset audio programs, they may also be easier to set up than self-fitting OTC hearing aids.

CONS The preset audio programs may not match your hearing loss as closely as a prescription or self-fitting aid will. And these don't need to be cleared by the FDA for efficacy before being sold over the counter, though they must meet standards about minimum technical specs and maximum safe volume.

Other Options

Prescription Hearing Aids

WHERE TO BUY THEM From a medical professional such as an audiologist or ENT, or a licensed hearing aid dispenser.

PROS Those professionals vet hearing aids and can help ensure quality and that the aids work properly for you. As part of the purchasing process, you'll also receive a professional hearing test and help selecting a hearing aid. And the hearing care provider will program your device so it treats your specific hearing problems. Follow-up adjustments are often included.

CONS Price. A pair can cost about $1,000 to $6,000 and is usually not covered (or not fully covered) by insurance. In addition, you'll have to go to the provider's office or a retail location for in-person appointments.

Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs) and Other 'Hearables'

WHERE TO BUY THEM In a retail setting such as a drugstore or electronics store, or online.

PROS Price (PSAPs can be found for less than $20). Other devices broadly known as "hearables" tend to have many functions, including some hearing-aid-like features. For instance, with Apple's AirPods Pro earbuds, you can listen to music, reduce unwanted background noise, and amplify sounds you want to hear (like a lecture).

CONS PSAPs, which are meant to be used by people without hearing loss in order to amplify sound in situations like bird-watching, aren't hearing aids (and aren't subject to FDA rules about hearing aid safety and quality). Hearables aren't allowed to be marketed for hearing loss.

PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD AND THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

profile—i.e., a "fitting"—and provide follow-up adjustments as needed.

With OTC hearing aids, there's no requirement to go to a provider or even have a hearing test before settling on a device. And any setup and adjustments may be largely up to you.

The Right Aid for You

Given the differences we noted above, if you're thinking about buying hearing aids, you'll want to carefully consider whether a prescription or OTC version is best. These steps can help.

▶ **Rule out other problems.** Hearing loss can sometimes be caused by issues such as infections, earwax buildup, or certain injuries. Hearing aids won't fix these problems, but other treatments may help. So it's important to have a doctor check your ears if you notice any of the following: blood, pus, or fluid coming out of your ears; ear pain or discomfort; feelings of dizziness or vertigo; or sudden changes in your hearing. You can also use an online tool called the Consumer Ear Disease Risk Assessment to help you determine if such issues are at fault (available at sites.northwestern.edu/cedra).

▶ **Get your hearing tested.** The gold standard for assessing hearing is a test with a hearing care provider such as an audiologist, according to experts we spoke with. This can give you a precise measure of your hearing loss, says Jasleen Singh, PhD, a postdoctoral scholar at Northwestern University's Auditory Research Lab. And that's key in helping you determine if your hearing loss is too severe for OTC aids.

Even with milder hearing loss, you may want professional help if you have complex hearing needs—say, you work in a classroom full of kids with sounds all around, says Sumit Dhar, PhD, a professor in the department of communication sciences and disorders at Northwestern University.

In-person hearing tests are usually covered by private medical insurance, and as of this year, Medicare will pay for general hearing evaluations without a doctor's referral.

There are also plenty of ways to assess your hearing at home using your computer or smartphone. These include tone-based testing apps, where audio tones are played in decreasing

8 OTC Brands on the Market Now

Eargo

MODELS: 5, 6, 7
PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Self-fitting.
BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable.
RETURN POLICY: 45 days if purchased from Eargo; 60 days if purchased from Best Buy.
CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone-based support, including with hearing professionals.
PRICE PER PAIR: From $1,950 for Eargo 5 to $2,650 for Eargo 7.
CONNECTED DEVICE: Pairs with an app for iOS or Android.
WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 or 2 years.

Go Hearing

MODELS: Go Lite, Go Prime
PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Preset. (Go Lite offers volume control only.)
BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable.
RETURN POLICY: 45 days if purchased from Go Hearing; 60 days if purchased from Best Buy.
CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone-based support.
PRICE PER PAIR: Go Lite: $199; Go Prime: $299.
CONNECTED DEVICE: None.
WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

Hearing Assist

MODELS: A wide array.
PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Preset.
BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable and replaceable battery models.
RETURN POLICY: 60 days.
CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone-based support. Optional setup call with a licensed hearing professional after purchase.
PRICE PER PAIR: $399 to $699.
CONNECTED DEVICE: Some models pair with an app for iOS or Android.
WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

HP

MODELS: Hearing Pro
PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Self-fitting.
BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable.
RETURN POLICY: 60 days.
CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone-based support, including the option to speak with licensed audiologists.
PRICE PER PAIR: $699.
CONNECTED DEVICE: Pairs with an app for iOS or Android.
WARRANTY PERIOD: 2 years.

volumes, and digits-in-noise or speech-in-noise tests, where you try to identify spoken numbers or words while background noise plays.

Mimi and SonicCloud are reliable iPhone apps for tone-based testing, according to experts with the Johns Hopkins Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health. The World Health Organization's hearing test app, hearWHO, uses the digits-in-noise method, as does online screening offered by Best Buy.

▶ **Consider your DIY comfort level.** Vinaya Manchaiah at the University of Colorado Hospital recommends thinking through whether you're in a position to manage the selection and setup of OTC aids on your own. While some companies offer high levels of phone-based or online support (see below), you still have to pick a device, figure out its settings, and in some cases, program it. You'll also need to learn how to put it on correctly and clean it, and troubleshoot problems. When you buy prescription hearing aids, an audiologist, doctor, or licensed hearing aid dispenser helps you with all of those tasks.

Choosing an OTC Aid

If you decide that an OTC hearing aid may work for you, the following can help you narrow down your choices.

▶ **How customizable is it?** OTC hearing aids come in two types: self-fitting and preset. Self-fitting aids tend to be costlier, but they're subject to more FDA scrutiny than presets, which means you can feel more confident that they've been proved to work. And self-fitting OTC aids are far more customizable.

With a self-fitting hearing aid, you'll typically use a smartphone app during the initial setup to help you adjust the device to suit your specific hearing issues. In addition to determining the level of amplification needed, these apps can zero in on such factors as which frequencies of sound you have the most trouble hearing.

Because self-fitting hearing aids can be more finely tuned than preset ones, they probably offer you a greater chance of getting the best possible settings for your needs, says Nicholas Reed, AuD, an assistant professor of

The number of OTC hearing aid brands will probably grow in the near future, but these are already available in some stores and online. Here's what they offer and what they cost.

Jabra

MODELS: Enhance Plus

PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Self-fitting.

BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable.

RETURN POLICY: 45 days if purchased from Jabra; 60 days if purchased from Best Buy.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone-based support service. Customers can also go to a certified Jabra Enhance Center for help. (To find one, go to jabra.com/hearing/enhance-center-locator.) Service fees may apply.

PRICE PER PAIR: $799.

CONNECTED DEVICE: Pairs with an app for iOS only.

WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

Lexie

MODELS: B1 Powered by Bose, B2 Powered by Bose, Lumen

PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Self-fitting.

BATTERY TYPE: B1, Lumen: replaceable battery. B2: rechargeable.

RETURN POLICY: 45 days if purchased from Lexie; 60 days if purchased from Best Buy.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone support and video-call support via an app.

PRICE PER PAIR: B1: $749; B2: $999; Lumen: $699.

CONNECTED DEVICE: Pairs with an app for iOS or Android.

WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

Lucid

MODELS: A wide array.

PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Preset.

BATTERY TYPE: Rechargeable and replaceable battery models.

RETURN POLICY: 90 days if purchased from Lucid or Sam's Club; 60 days if purchased elsewhere.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Phone and video-based support with licensed hearing professionals. You can also go to a Lucid Hearing center for in-person support.

PRICE PER PAIR: $199 to $999.

CONNECTED DEVICE: Some models pair with an app for iOS or Android.

WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

Sony

MODELS: CRE-C10, CRE-E10

PRESET OR SELF-FITTING? Self-fitting.

BATTERY TYPE: CRE-C10: replaceable battery; CRE-E10: rechargeable.

RETURN POLICY: 45 days if purchased from Sony; 60 days if purchased from Best Buy.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Support via Sony.

PRICE PER PAIR: CRE-C10: $999.99; CRE-E10: $1299.99.

CONNECTED DEVICE: Pairs with an app for iOS or Android.

WARRANTY PERIOD: 1 year.

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS

audiology with the Johns Hopkins Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health.

But some users may find the self-fitting process difficult. And self-fitting aids may not be accessible to everyone. Jabra's Enhance Plus self-fitting hearing aids work only with Apple devices, for example, so check before you buy.

Preset OTC aids come with a number of set programs, each one for different levels of hearing loss in the mild-to-moderate range. But these may be good enough for many users. A study published in the American Journal of Audiology in 2021 found that devices with presets fit the hearing needs of 68 percent of older adults with mild-to-moderate hearing loss.

▶ **What shape works best for you?** Like prescription hearing aids, OTC devices come in two basic shapes: in the ear or behind the ear. In-the-ear aids tend to be smaller, sometimes small enough to fit completely inside the ear canal. Behind-the-ear aids consist of connected pieces: a case that contains the device's hardware and sits behind the ear, and a receiver that sits in the canal or an earbud.

Does one shape work better than the other? "I actually tend to think whatever hearing aid you want to wear and you will wear more and you like wearing, you should pick that one," says Laura Coco, AuD, PhD, an assistant professor in the School of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at San Diego State University. Still, she notes that behind-the-ear styles tend to be slightly better at filtering out background noise.

Smaller devices also tend to be a bit more difficult to manipulate and clean, and may have less capacity for features like wireless audio streaming, says Anna Jilla, AuD, PhD, an assistant professor of audiology at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

▶ **How good is the customer support?** One of the advantages of buying hearing aids through an audiologist or other hearing professional is that you have an expert helping you figure out how to customize, use, and troubleshoot your hearing aid. That support may make a difference. In one study, people who got hearing aids either through an audiologist or OTC reaped similar benefits—but those who saw an audiologist expressed more satisfaction with their hearing aids.

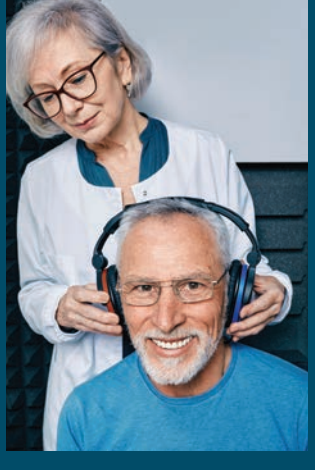
It would be unfortunate if people who could benefit from an OTC hearing aid ended up not using them because of insufficient assistance, says Larry Humes, PhD, an author of that study and a distinguished professor emeritus of speech, language, and hearing sciences at Indiana University. "Not because the device isn't good—it meets FDA guidelines, it's a good-quality device," he says. "But all the extra support somebody needs in adjusting to hearing aids that normally could be provided through an audiologist isn't available."

That's why it's critical to find out exactly what support you'll have access to with the hearing aid you're buying, including what days and hours the support is available, for how long after your purchase, and what sorts of experts will be providing it. For example, while most companies have phone-based customer support, in some cases the people you reach when you call may not have any special expertise with hearing aids. Other companies will connect you to licensed hearing care professionals via phone or even at walk-in stores in your area.

▶ **What's the return policy?** It takes time to get used to hearing aids and figure out whether they're really working for you or not. A return policy of at least a month should give you the opportunity to thoroughly try out your OTC hearing aid but send it back if it's simply not helping you sufficiently. As you shop, compare different products' warranty periods, too.

Rx Aids: Ratings of Brands and Retailers

Many prescription devices remain available for people with severe hearing loss or those with mild-to-moderate hearing loss who want the assistance of a professional when buying hearing aids. If you're in one of those groups, Consumer Reports' survey-based ratings of hearing aid brands and retailers can help you figure out which products to look for and where you can get them.



WORSE BETTER

Brands	Reader Survey Results																
	Overall satisfaction score	Battery life	Ease of changing or charging battery	Ease of cleaning	Durability	Reliability	Fit/comfort	Value	Sound clarity	One-on-one conversations in noisy places	One-on-one conversations in quiet places	Talking in small groups	Listening to the TV or radio	Talking on a cell phone	Talking on a landline phone	In a movie theater, play, or concert	In a windy environment
Phillips	75	▲	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▼	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	▼
Oticon	75	●	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	▲	▼▼	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	▼
Phonak	75	●	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▲	●	●	●	▼
Rexton	73	●	▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Bernafon	73	▼	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
ReSound	72	●	▲	●	▲	▲	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Widex	72	●	▲	●	▲	▲	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Unitron	72	▼	▲	●	●	●	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼▼
Audibel	71	▼	▲	●	●	▲	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Lucid	71	▼	●	●	●	●	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Signia	71	●	▲	●	▲	●	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
TruHearing	71	●	▲	●	●	●	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Miracle Ear	70	●	▲	●	▲	●	●	▼▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	▲	●	●	●	▼
Starkey	70	●	▲	●	●	●	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼
Beltone	69	●	▲	●	●	●	●	▼	●	▼▼	▲	●	●	●	●	●	▼

HOW WE SURVEY: We surveyed 26,788 CR members about their prescription hearing aids (manufactured in or after 2017) in December 2021–January 2022.* We also surveyed the members about various features and how aids performed in different situations. Ratings are based on CR members, who may not be representative of the general U.S. population. The **Overall satisfaction score** represents overall satisfaction with the hearing aid and is not exclusively determined by factors under the survey results. Differences of less than 2 points are not meaningful.

Retailers	Costco Wholesale	Connect Hearing	HearingLife	Sam's Club	TruHearing	Audibel	HearUSA	Miracle-Ear	Beltone	Starkey Store
Overall Satisfaction Score	88	83	81	79	78	77	76	76	76	76
Hearing Aid Options	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲	●	●
Selection	▲	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Price Transparency	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	●	●	●	●
Price Plan Options	▲▲	●	●	▲	●	●	●	●	●	●
Evaluation	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Follow-Up Service	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲

HOW WE SURVEY: **Ratings** are based on responses of 9,407 members in a December 2021–January 2022 survey who answered questions about individual retailers.* **Overall satisfaction score** represents overall satisfaction with the prescription hearing aid retailer and is not exclusively determined by factors under the survey results. Differences of less than 2 points are not meaningful. We also asked members to rate their overall satisfaction with the shopping experience based on the type of retailer they used. The Veterans Administration and wholesale clubs received top scores from the 24,483 members who responded.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

*The Overall Satisfaction Score for each ratings chart represents overall satisfaction with the aids or retailer, respectively. In both, 100 is the highest possible score, meaning that all respondents were completely satisfied. An 80 means very satisfied and a 60, somewhat satisfied, on average.

ARE YOUR NONSTICK PANS SAFE TO USE?

Our tests of three pans to see whether they contained potentially harmful PFAS chemicals raised some concerns. Here's how to shop for safer cookware.

BY KEVIN LORIA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON DYER

Ceramic

An alternative to PTFE, ceramic coatings are made of silicon dioxide and other metal oxides—materials derived from what is essentially beach sand. The dozen or so pans in our ratings with "PTFE free" claims have a ceramic coating.

Natural Patina

With time and seasoning, cast-iron and carbon steel pans develop a fine, nonstick patina. Some are even sold pre-seasoned. They last much longer than traditional nonstick pans; when the patina wears, re-season with oil and then heat.

A Quick Guide to Pans That Don't Stick

Manufacturers have a bunch of trademarked names for their nonstick coatings, including Excalibur, Quantanium, Thermalloy, and Thermolon. But coatings basically fall into two categories: Those that contain PTFE, aka Teflon, and those that don't. There are also a few that aren't marketed as nonstick but pretty much function that way.

PTFE

Teflon is the most widely recognized brand name for polytetrafluoroethylene, or PTFE. It's a type of PFAS, a class of chemicals linked to multiple health concerns. Most of the nonstick frying pans in our ratings have a PTFE coating.

Enamel

Though not usually sold as "nonstick," some but not all porcelain-enamel pans keep food from sticking fairly well. The coating is a glossy, heavy-duty glass fused to metal, typically cast iron, that's also easy to clean.

IF you've shopped for nonstick cookware recently, you may have noticed a label on your new frying pan indicating that it's free of certain hazardous chemicals.

Of most concern is a class of chemicals known as PFAS, which stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. They're called forever chemicals because many persist for months or even years in our bodies and they break down very slowly, if ever, in the environment. Worse, growing research links them to a host of health problems, including thyroid disease, higher cholesterol levels, kidney and testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, liver damage, and kidney disease.

And they appear in many nonstick pots and pans because they are used to make a nonstick coating called PTFE, which you probably know better as Teflon.

It's hard to get a clear idea of the safety of the many substances your cookware may be coated with, especially once that cookware is old or scratched. But understanding which pans contain PFAS and which do not is a good place to start.

To help unravel the confusion regarding PFAS in pots and pans, CR recently tested three nonstick frying pans recommended in our ratings at different prices. They were the Our Place Always Pan and the Red Copper pan, both of which have ceramic coatings and are said to be free of PTFE, and the Swiss Diamond pan, which has a PTFE coating and until recently carried a claim that it was free of a specific related compound known as PFOA. (The Red Copper pan is no longer widely available.)

The two ceramic pans didn't contain any of the 96 PFAS our testers looked for. The Swiss Diamond PTFE-coated pan, on the other hand, had measurable amounts of several of them, including PFOA. That compound, which has been studied more than most other related chemicals, has been clearly linked to health risks in humans.

Because CR's tests and research show that even products made without PFOA may contain the compound because of how they're manufactured, CR decided to no longer display "PFOA free" in our ratings of nonstick cookware. Such claims might not be reliable for PTFE-coated products.

"Avoiding products made with PFAS, including pots and pans, may help protect your health and the environment," says Eric Boring, PhD, a CR chemist who oversaw our testing. "And our findings suggest that consumers who want to avoid PFAS in their nonstick cookware may want to focus on products that claim to be PTFE-free."

He and other experts CR spoke with say that nonstick pans that are made with a ceramic coating and carry a "PTFE free" claim, such as the Red Copper and Always pans, are far less likely to have forever chemicals.

Of course, many uncoated pans, including those made with carbon steel or cast iron, are also unlikely to contain PFAS, though they might not prevent food from sticking quite as well or be as easy to clean.

Looking for PFAS in Frying Pans

Measuring PFAS in pans isn't easy. First, a team of technicians at the lab used a rotating tool to scrape coatings off 30 of each of the three pans, generating enough material to run two tests on each. The coatings were then tested for 96 PFAS, far more than is typical.

The Swiss Diamond Pan Problem

The PTFE-coated Swiss Diamond pan had measurable levels of 16 of the 96 PFAS we looked for. Our tests found an average of 4 parts per billion (ppb) of PFOA in the coating, even though the packaging on the Swiss Diamond pan we bought said it was PFOA-free. (Swiss Diamond has since removed this claim from its website.)

Levels of some other PFAS were far higher, leading to a combined PFAS level of 639 ppb in one Swiss Diamond sample, and 703 ppb in the other.

Amir Alon, general manager of Swiss Made Brands USA, the distributor of Swiss Diamond products in the U.S., emphasized the safety and quality

of the cookware. He challenged CR's results, saying that the manufacturer had used PFOA-free raw materials since 2007 and that the high temperatures used in the coating process would remove any PFOA. He also suggested that the PFOA that CR found could have come from cross contamination in the testing process.

However, CR took several precautions to prevent cross contamination, such as testing all equipment and materials that came into contact with the samples for PFAS; we found no PFOA in those tests.

Several outside experts who weren't involved in CR's testing but reviewed the results say they weren't surprised by CR's findings, even if PFOA isn't used in the manufacturing of the pans.

For one thing, PFOA could be created as a byproduct of other PFAS when a pan is cured, says William Dichtel, PhD, the Robert L. Letsinger Professor of Chemistry at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., who has published research on ways to destroy PFAS.

Igor Novosselov, PhD, who teaches mechanical engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle and has helped develop a reactor that can break down PFAS using superheated water, agrees. "We see similar things," he says of his lab's work. He also says the higher levels of other PFAS detected in CR's tests are even more concerning than the PFOA levels we found.

Graham Peaslee, PhD, a professor of physics, chemistry, and biochemistry at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana who studies PFAS, concurs. And he offers another possible explanation. He says PFOA and other PFAS compounds could be trapped within layers of PTFE and not be destroyed during the curing process.

The Ceramic Pan Difference

CR didn't detect any of the 96 PFAS we looked for in either of the two ceramic-coated pans, the Always Pan and the Red Copper, both of which carry a "PTFE free" claim. It's theoretically possible that other PFAS could be present in the pans, given that thousands of such compounds exist.

Most of the scientists and other experts CR consulted with said they were pleased but not surprised to see that we didn't detect PFAS in those pans. That's because such chemicals aren't needed to make nonstick

PROP STYLING: SARAH VASIL

ceramic cookware, says Lee Ferguson, PhD, an environmental analytical chemist and associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

The Problems With PFAS

Exposure to PFAS—which are used widely not only in nonstick cookware but also in stain- and water-resistant gear, greaseproof food packaging, and many other products—has been linked to liver damage, lowered immunity in kids, and many other health concerns.

PTFE and similar compounds are a type of PFAS in polymer form, which means molecules are joined together tightly, like a plastic. That should make it safer for humans because such compounds are too large to readily be absorbed by our bodies, says Boring at CR.

But pans that have been used for a long time, especially those with scratched coatings, might not be as safe as pans in pristine condition.

And when PTFE coatings overheat, they can produce fumes that are deadly to small birds and may be harmful to humans as well. You could describe this occurrence as "the canary in the kitchen," says Peaslee at Notre Dame.

PFAS in pots and pans pose risks even if the chemicals don't migrate directly into our bodies. That's because the chemicals can also enter the environment—and from there our food, water, and air—when the pans are manufactured and again when they are thrown away.

Indeed, contamination from the production and disposal of PFAS at an industrial scale has been tied to a growing list of health and environmental hazards.

Decoding Labels

Despite growing awareness of the health and environmental concerns raised by PFAS, it's not easy to find cookware that doesn't contain PFAS, especially if you're looking for something that will let you cook, say, an omelet without much cleanup.

For example, consumers who see a "PFOA free" claim on packaging for a nonstick pan may mistakenly assume that means it contains no PFAS at all. But that claim could apply to just one type of PFAS (PFOA), not PFAS overall.

Starting around 2009, U.S. manufacturers of PFOA began voluntarily halting sales of it in this country for uses where the compound could come into contact with food. And by November 2016, it was no longer used in any food packaging, cookware, or other food-related products sold in the U.S., according to the Food and Drug Administration.

But based on CR's tests and research, even products made without PFOA might not be free of it, because the compound can be created as a byproduct of other PFAS.

In fact, CR's product safety experts say that the term "PFAS free" is misleading. "For one thing, there are literally thousands of PFAS compounds in use, but most tests used today look for less than a hundred, so it's difficult to know if a product is free of them all," Boring says.

In addition, manufacturers may use the word "free" to indicate that the amount is below a specific level—maybe one set by a regulatory agency, for example—not that a product doesn't have PFAS at all.

A California law that went into effect in 2023 will ban companies from claiming in online sale listings that a cookware product is free of any one PFAS—like PFOA—if it contains any other PFAS, such as PTFE. Those claims will have to be removed from packaging by 2024, when a similar law will go into effect in Colorado.

Alon, the distributor of Swiss Diamond, told CR that in order to comply with the new California law, the company took the "PFOA free" claim off its website.

A "PTFE free" claim on a nonstick pan, however, can be more meaningful. That's especially the case for pans with a ceramic coating.

Ceramics are primarily made of silicon dioxide and metal oxides, not PTFE or any other PFAS, says Gillian Z. Miller, PhD, a senior scientist at the Ecology Center, an environment-focused nonprofit group in Michigan.

An earlier study of 24 nonstick frying and baking pans she helped conduct concluded that pans with a "PTFE free" label were indeed made with a ceramic coating.

How to Find Pans Made Without PFAS

If you currently have a nonstick pan with a PTFE coating and it's in good condition, experts we've consulted don't think that it's likely to expose you to significant levels of PFAS.

However, be sure not to scrape it with metal utensils or steel wool, which can abrade the pan's surface. In addition, don't preheat PTFE pans when they are empty, because that can cause them to overheat and release toxic fumes.

Once a pan starts to degrade, or if you're in the market for new cookware, you may want to consider buying an uncoated pan, such as a stainless steel or cast-iron one, or a nonstick pan that has a ceramic coating instead of one made with PTFE.

Luckily, plenty of good alternative products are available, as shown on the facing page.

The Best Frying Pans If You Want to Avoid PFAS

It's not surprising that nonstick frying pans outsell all other types by a considerable margin. They're easy to use, a cinch to clean, and well-priced. But the nonstick coatings don't last forever, and most nonstick pans have to be replaced every few years, which adds to the waste stream. A greater concern may be the PTFE coating on many nonstick pans, which is made with chemicals linked to a variety of health concerns. All the pans below (and shown above, left to right) are made without PTFE and did well in our usability tests. —MARY H.J. FARRELL

STAINLESS STEEL

Made In Cookware Stainless Steel

Made In Cookware is sold directly to consumers online in sets or individually. This 10-inch frying pan impressed testers with its even cooking and ease of cleaning. The handles are quite sturdy and stay cool to the touch while you're making your eggs or pancakes. Its cleaning score is one notch below our top rating.

CERAMIC NONSTICK

GreenPan Reserve

This is one of our top-rated nonstick frying pans—and the coating is ceramic. The 10-inch pan comes as part of a two-pan set that also includes an 8-inch version. In our tests, eggs slid out easily, leaving nothing behind. Cooking evenness is also top-notch. The nonstick coating did well on our durability test, in which we abrade the surface with steel wool for 2,000 strokes or until it wears through, whichever comes first.

COATED CAST-IRON

Tramontina 80131/066DS

This Tramontina frying pan, which is coated with enamel, excels at a crucial task for a cast-iron skillet: searing. In our test, we seared a New York strip steak. It was also very good at baking cornbread, on a par with most of the top cast-iron pans we've tested. Finally, it cleaned up really well after each of our cooking tasks, earning a top score for this type of pan.

UNCOATED CAST-IRON

Lodge Cast Iron Pre-seasoned

The Lodge uncoated cast-iron sears steaks with the best of them, and comes pre-seasoned with a thin layer of oil baked in. Keep it that way and it will last for generations. The seasoning is what also makes it so easy to clean. In fact, almost all the uncoated cast-iron skillets in our tests were a breeze to clean.

CARBON STEEL

Matfer Bourgeat Black Steel 62003 062003

Like cast iron, carbon steel pans can be moved from stovetop to oven and back again. The Matfer Bourgeat Black Steel is a good example. It heats evenly and is easy to clean once you're all done. Like the other carbon steel pans we tested, this one was easy to clean. But to keep it that way you have to re-season it from time to time.

Ratings › **Skillet Skills** The pans and skillets that rise to the top of our ratings do their work without burning or scorching your food, are easy to clean, and are sturdy enough to last a long time.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features		
			Cooking evenness	Nonstick food release	Nonstick durability	Handle temperature	Handle sturdiness	Ease of cleaning	Dishwasher-safe	Weight (lb.)	Induction cooktop
PTFE-FREE NONSTICK (CERAMIC)											
Caraway Ceramic-coated	89	$95	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	NA	●	2.8	●
GreenPan Reserve	88	$100	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	NA	●	2.0	
Oxo Ceramic Professional Non-Stick	87	$60	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	NA	●	2.5	●
Cuisinart Green Gourmet Hard Anodized GG22-24	85	$40	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	NA		1.0	
Blue Diamond Diamond Infused Ceramic	83	$20	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	❙	NA	●	1.7	
GreenPan Paris Hard Anodized	82	$50	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏫	🔼	NA		2.3	
Farberware Glide	80	$18	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❙	NA	●	1.4	
Copper Chef Nonstick	80	$20	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❙	NA	●	1.5	●
Red Volcano Textured Ceramic	80	$20	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❙	NA	●	1.7	
GreenPan Levels Hard Anodized Stackable	78	$60	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	❙	NA	●	2.3	
Our Place Always Pan	76	$145	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❙	NA		2.8	●
Gotham Steel Nonstick	75	$20	⏫	❙	🔼	⏫	⏬	NA	●	1.3	
Made By Design (Target) Ceramic Coated Aluminum	73	$20	🔼	⏫	⏫	⏫	❙	NA	●	1.7	●
STAINLESS STEEL											
Oxo Mira Tri-Ply Stainless	89	$80	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	⏫	🔼	●	2.7	●
Made By Design (Target) Stainless Steel	81	$20	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	❙	🔼	●	2.2	●
Cuisinart N9122-810 Smartnest	80	$60	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	2.2	●
Made In Cookware Stainless Steel	79	$90	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	🔼	●	2.5	●
Amazon Commercial	79	$28	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	⏫	🔼	●	2.9	●
Le Creuset Poele	79	$135	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	❙	●	2.3	●
All-Clad D3 Stainless Everyday 3-ply Bonded	78	$100	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	🔼		2.3	●
The Cellar (Macy's) Stainless Steel	78	$100	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	⏬	⏫	●	2.6	●
All-Clad D5 Stainless Brushed 5-ply Bonded	78	$185	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	🔼		2.5	●
Cuisinart Chef's Classic	75	$45	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	⏬	🔼	●	2.0	●
Tramontina Tri-Ply Clad	72	$29	⏫	NA	NA	⏫	🔼	⏬	●	2.3	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results						Features				
			Baking	Searing	Cooking evenness	Handle temperature	Handle sturdiness	Ease of cleaning	Weight (lb.)	Interior cooking surface (in.)	Interior height (in.)	Handle temperature (° F)	Induction cooktop
UNCOATED CAST-IRON													
✓ **Butter Pat** Joan Cast Iron Skillet	87	$325	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	NA	NA	⌃	6.3	10	2	225	●
$ **Calphalon** Select by Calphalon Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	79	$30	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	NA	NA	⌃	6.5	10	2	164	●
$ **Bayou Classic** Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	78	$25	–	⌃⌃	⌃	NA	NA	⌃	7.0	10	2	161	●
✓ **Finex** Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	78	$230	⌃	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	7.7	9	2	123	●
$ **Lodge** Cast Iron Pre-seasoned	77	$30	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	7.8	10	2	176	●
$ **Food Network** Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet (Kohl's)	77	$30	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	6.1	10	2	114	●
Smithey Ironware Cast Iron Skillet	75	$200	⌃	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	–	8	10	2	169	●
Victoria Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	74	$30	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	6.9	10	2	151	●
Home-Complete Preseasoned Skillet Cast Iron	73	$25	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	6.6	10	2	159	●
Amazon Basics Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	67	$27	⌄⌄	⌃⌃	⌄⌄	NA	NA	⌃	7.9	10	2	150	●
COATED CAST-IRON													
$ **Tramontina** 80131/066DS	79	$60	⌃	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	7.4	10	2	109	●
$ **Crock-Pot** Artisan 111988.01	77	$62	⌃	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	8.4	10	2	106	●
Staub Enamel Coated	76	$210	⌃	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	6.6	10	2	105	●
Le Creuset Signature	75	$240	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	6.6	10	2	102	●
Cuisinart CI45-30CR	74	$80	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	9.2	10	3	107	●
Viking Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Skillet	73	$160	–	⌃⌃	–	NA	NA	–	8.1	10	2	104	●
KitchenAid Enameled 48553	63	$130	–	⌃	–	NA	NA	⌃	8.2	9	2	137	●
Ayesha Curry Enamel Coated	63	$22	⌄⌄	⌃⌃	⌄⌄	NA	NA	⌃	8.4	11	2	110	●
CARBON STEEL													
$ **Matfer Bourgeat** Black Steel 62003 062003	68	$42	⌃	NA	⌃	⌃⌃	–	⌃	3.8	7	2	NA	●
Made In Cookware Blue Carbon Steel	67	$70	–	NA	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃	⌃	3.1	7	2	NA	●
Lodge CRS10	66	$45	–	NA	⌃	⌃⌃	⌄⌄	⌃	3.1	7	1	NA	●
Mauviel 3651.24	61	$60	–	NA	–	⌃⌃	⌄⌄	⌃	2.6	7	2	NA	●

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines the results of all the tests, weighted by importance. **Cooking evenness** is measured using a thermal imaging camera to make sure there are no hot or cold spots. **Nonstick durability** is how well the coating stands up to 2,000 strokes with steel wool. **Handle temperature** is how hot the handle becomes when cooking, and **handle sturdiness** rates how well it withstands a stress test. **Ease of cleaning** reflects how easy it is to wash a pan after each use. **Baking** is assessed by cooking cornbread in cast iron and carbon steel. **Searing** is how well a cast-iron pan browns a strip steak. We also weigh each pan and measure the cooking surface. "NA" means not applicable.

SMART VACATION DEALS AHEAD

Here's how you can enjoy a luxury trip or upgrade the one you've got planned without breaking the bank.

by
JESSE WILLS

DESTINATIONS UNLIMITED

Are you a city person? A beach person? An adventure lover or activity seeker? Luxury travel to places as diverse as the beaches of Brazil and Antarctic coast—or to cities like Paris or vineyards in Bordeaux—can be budget-friendlier than you think. There are even deals to be had at some top golf resorts.

WITH THE WORLD well past the pandemic's peak, Americans are showing a strong thirst for travel in 2023. Almost a quarter of us plan to travel more for leisure this year than last, according to a U.S. Travel Association study. Vacation rental bookings are up. Flights are full. Itineraries are ambitious.

"Travel is back, full force," says Mary Cropper, a travel adviser based in Boston. "People are coming out of the woodwork after the pandemic, really investing a lot of time and energy to curate the perfect trip."

And since demand is up, leisure travel prices continue to stay high. Airline tickets may come in slightly cheaper than in 2022–a ticket costing $400 last summer might hit at around $350 this year, according to travel booking site Hopper–but that's still higher than pre-pandemic rates. And inflation has jacked up costs for everything from hotels to rental cars to restaurants.

But with some foresight, research, and perhaps the help of a good travel adviser, it's still possible to arrange the big trip you've been dreaming about without having to start selling off your furniture. Here's how.

NO. 01

NEW PLACES TO GO

→ Find Where Your Dollar Goes Further

It's easy to max out your travel budget when the destination is a perennially pricey domestic locale like Maui or New York City. But with the dollar staying strong during the global economic downturn, this might be the year to make the most of a favorable exchange rate. At press time, the dollar was still performing at relative highs against the euro, Japanese yen, and Chinese yuan, aka renminbi. In 2014, the British pound was worth about $1.70; now it's worth about $1.20. The Argentine peso, Costa Rican colón, and Brazilian real are all at a discount of late, too. So a fab five-star retreat at any of one of these destinations might now be within reach.

→ Identify Emerging Destinations

Balking at the cost of a given trip, whether it's

WHERE THE DOLLAR HAS BETTER BUYING POWER

Exchange rates against U.S. currency were particularly favorable in these countries at press time.

1 US DOLLAR =

0.82	200	5.25	549
BRITISH POUND	ARGENTINE PESOS	BRAZILIAN REALS	COSTA RICAN COLÓNES

GO DURING SHOULDER SEASON

Timing your travel right can save serious money. Prices are lower, and crowds sparser, during a location's off-peak "shoulder season." So go to Mexico City in March, the Grand Canyon in October, and Hawaii in spring. The weather can be just as good as—or better than—in high season.

PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: STEPHANIE KENNER/SHUTTERSTOCK; RON AND PATTY THOMAS/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID SACKS/GETTY IMAGES; IAN DAGNALL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; OSCAR FARRERA/HURTIGRUTEN; ANTON PETRUS/GETTY IMAGES EXPEDITIONS

a beach all-inclusive or more complex itinerary? Consider another sweet spot in the same vicinity. Keith Waldon, a travel adviser based in Austin, Texas, suggests talking to a destination specialist who is an authority on the area. "Maybe you're interested in the Amalfi Coast but don't want to pay the high-season rates," he says. "A destination specialist might steer you toward the more affordable Tuscan coast, where there are gorgeous towns to explore and where you can hop on the train to Florence for a day trip."

→ Make the Most of Shoulder Season

If you aren't at the mercy of a school schedule and don't need to travel when everyone else is—in July and early August, for example—you can stretch your budget by traveling at off-peak times, when hotel prices can be as much as 50 percent lower. Along with gentler prices, you might find weather almost as good or better. But because shoulder seasons aren't at the same time everywhere, hit the internet or ask a travel adviser familiar with the area about specialized seasonal intel. You'll find fewer crowds and better deals visiting Hawaii in mid-April or May; Hilton Head Island, S.C., in September; the Grand Canyon in October; or Mexico City in March. At Caribbean resorts, the June-to-November hurricane season can present significant discounts, but purchase trip insurance.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Italy's Tuscan coast has vistas as dramatic as those in ever-popular Amalfi—but has fewer tourists and lower prices, too. To experience la dolce vita, check out Porto Ercole. From here, you can take day trips to Siena, Lucca, and Florence.

→ Book Your Flights Early

"People have the misconception that it's cheaper to go last-minute, but things have changed since the pandemic," says Gai Spann, founder of Spanning the Globe Tours. "Instead of flying half-full flights, airlines are canceling them. The bottom line is that they don't need your last-minute fare anymore, so you're better off shopping early." To understand what you should realistically expect to pay (and what's a deal), Spann recommends getting familiar with a route's usual and predicted cost at sites such as Google Flights, Hopper, and Skyscanner. The cheapest day to book, on average, is Sunday, according to a recent report from the Airlines Reporting Corp. and Expedia. The most expensive tends to be Friday. Starting a domestic trip on a Wednesday vs. Sunday or Monday can save you up to 15 percent.

Find a More Flexible Travel Credit Card

IF YOU'RE A FREQUENT TRAVELER with a co-branded airline credit card, you might want to switch to a flexible travel rewards card. "They have significant advantages," says Senitra Horbrook, credit cards editor for the Points Guy, a credit card and travel website. That's because the points with co-branded cards are good only with the airline the issuing bank partners with, whereas transferable rewards cards let you choose among many.

Say you want to book rewards travel to Europe: With transferable points you could choose the airline with the best availability, point value, and route options. There are downsides: You may lose airline-specific perks, such as being able to check a free bag. You will also lose access to the airline's lounge if your co-branded card grants you that.

For those just getting into the travel rewards game, Horbrook recommends the Chase Sapphire Preferred card, which carries a $95 annual fee but an impressive 60,000-point sign-up bonus that you can use with 14 airline and hotel partners. With this card you'll accrue up to 5 points per dollar spent on travel purchases and 3 points for dining.

For frequent luxury travelers, Horbrook recommends cards such as the Capital One Venture X rewards credit card and the Platinum card from American Express. They have steeper annual fees ($395 and $695, respectively) but carry benefits like statement credits for travel purchases ($300 for Capital One, $400 combined between airline and hotel for Amex), along with other bonuses, like concierge service, complimentary elite status at certain hotels, and access to some swank airport lounges.

PHOTOS, FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MATTEO COLOMBO/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN COLETTI/GETTY IMAGES; KATRINA BROWN/ADOBE STOCK. PHOTO, THIS PAGE: VLADIMIR SAZONOV/ADOBE STOCK

NO. 02

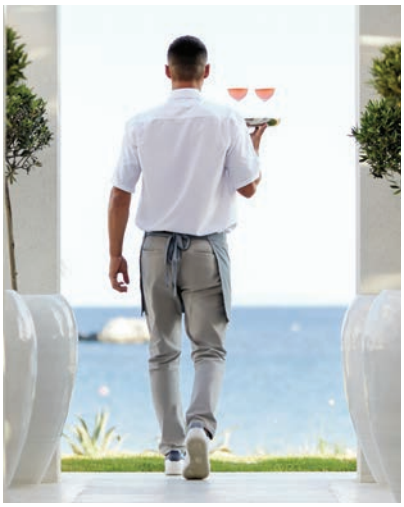
GREAT PLACES TO STAY

→ Go Luxury Camping (or 'Glamping')

The fresh-air trend that gained speed during the pandemic has shown no signs of slowing. Case in point: the growing network of national park-adjacent, safari-inspired accommodations from Under Canvas, where you can have a unique overnight experience near some of America's natural wonders without needing to buy a boatload of gear to do it. The locations—near Yellowstone, Zion, Grand Canyon, Acadia, and other national parks—offer restaurants, adventure concierge services, and en suite bathrooms. Nights at Under Canvas locations start under $200. Also check out Terramor, the campground network KOA's entry into glamping (glamorous camping), featuring Frette linens and WiFi in each tent, in Bar Harbor, Maine. The Resort at Paws Up, in Greenough, Mont., features 36 ultraluxe tents on the Blackfoot River.

→ Try a Better All-Inclusive

If the term "all inclusive" makes you think of watered-down drinks and bad buffet food … sure, places like those are still around. But a growing number of resorts that are all-inclusive—meaning one pays a flat fee per traveler, which generally includes lodging, food, drinks, and some activities—are luring guests by leveling up. Palmaïa, the House of AïA, in the Mayan Riviera in Mexico, for example, features swim-up suites, yoga programs, and meditation sessions. On the Greek island of Kos, Ikos is presenting a new all-inclusive concept: dining out at a local restaurant as part of your all-inclusive cost. "All-inclusives are about having no hidden surprises," Waldon says. "Some people want to put their wallet away and not have to think about signing another bill."



ONE PRICE FOR EVERYTHING

All-inclusive resorts can be luxurious these days. But the fancy ones have the same everything-included pricing that makes them a deal if you like to drink or eat well. The Ikos resort on the Greek island Kos offers a dramatic setting and Michelin-starred chefs.

→ Look for a Historic Hotel

If you are headed to the Iberian Peninsula: In Spain, consider a stay at one of the 90-plus paradores, a network of hotels converted beginning in the 1920s from architecturally significant or restored historic buildings and castles. Take Parador de Corias: At the former monastery, built in the 11th century, you'll find luxury accommodations with sweeping countryside views, along with a spa, restaurant, and pool. In Portugal, you'll find over 40 pousadas, also restored historic sites. Paradores and pousadas tend to feature elevated local fare and beautifully appointed rooms, some for under 100 euros per night, including meals.

→ Book a Ritzy Rental

Compared with staying at a hotel, comfortable luxury rentals with amenities like a well-equipped kitchen and swimming pool can lower costs on food, drinks, entertainment, and transportation, especially if you're traveling with a group. You're also likely to have a more authentic experience staying in an area where the locals live. In addition to Airbnb and Vrbo, consider alternative options such as Airbnb Luxe, Onefinestay, and Plum Guide for posh rentals. Booking a home stay using points is an option, too, via Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy.

PHOTOS: IKOS

GET THE PACKAGE DEAL

Carefully crafted luxury packages that include flights, hotels, rental cars, and meals can cost a lot less than you'd spend to book each piece separately. Costco, for one, offers members multiple package deals to Ireland that include stops in Dublin and respites along the coast.

NO. 03

DEALS & DISCOUNTS

→ Request a Room Upgrade

Beyond asking nicely, you're more likely to get a room upgrade if you're a member of a hotel's loyalty program (and even more likely if you carry its co-branded credit card). Travel advisers can help, too. If you already have your eyes on a luxury property, you might search online for a travel adviser that has a "preferred agency" status with that brand, whether it's Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, Rosewood, or something else. "Preferred agencies might give their clients a complimentary upgrade, plus breakfast for two daily, spa credits, and even airport transfers," says Waldon, the travel adviser in Austin. "You can access that just by booking through a travel agency with standing in that program."

→ Find a Package Deal

Even if you're a savvy traveler adept at shopping for flights, resorts, cars, and cruises à la carte, don't dismiss package deals put together by reputable travel agents or … your favorite warehouse club? Indeed, Costco can book members to Botswana, Ireland, Bordeaux, or beyond. The surprisingly luxe travel packages are available both in-store and online, and are backed with clear cancellation policies and the retailer's robust customer service. Perks like free transfers, credits, and meals are often included. To make sure the deal's a good one, double check fares against those on online booking sites. Booking site Expedia also features an array of package deals sorted by interest, from golf vacations in Palm Springs, Calif., to couples getaways in Paris.

→ Take a Cruise

Cruise itineraries are getting ever more interesting, with slow-speed European river barge cruises surging in popularity along with luxury "expedition" cruises to places like the Arctic Circle. Look to outfitters like Hurtigruten for bucket list itineraries like Circumnavigating Iceland, a nine-day trek from $4,721, or a seven-day Galápagos Islands Expedition Cruise from $6,082. On the lower-priced end of the spectrum are the megaships sailing from the world's busiest passenger ports. Deals for those can often be had if you book very early or closer to the departure date: Since the cruise lines make a large portion of their money from onboard purchases, they seek to sail full ships. Check sites like CruiseSheet for bargains.

→ Consider 4 Stars Over 5

If you are booking a luxury stay in Europe, you can save money by opting for a four-star hotel rather than a five-star, and get much the same experience, Waldon says. "The star rating is very strict in Europe, and there are some superluxury properties that don't get a five-star rating because they don't have a top-level restaurant or room service. But if you're in the heart of Paris or another European city that's surrounded by great restaurants, you probably won't care." A few of Waldon's favorite luxury value places are Pavillon Faubourg Saint-Germain in Paris, often priced at a fraction of the price of five-star hotels like the Shangri-La and the Ritz; the Chesterfield Mayfair in London; the Hotel Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Italy; and the Kimpton Charlotte Square in Edinburgh, Scotland.

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AJ WATT/GETTY IMAGES; JON_CHICA/ADOBE STOCK; ADOBE STOCK

SCRIMP HERE, SPLURGE THERE

Visits to museums and other attractions can get pricey. But in NYC, you might regret it if you let that stop you from going to the Guggenheim, the American Museum of Natural History, or the top of the Chrysler Building. Save on things like hotel breakfasts instead: At a café, you can have a biscotti and get a taste of the street life.

NO. 04

SECRET ADDRESSES

→ Leverage Blogs and Social Media

Doing some digital homework can lead you to the restaurants that locals love. Look to recent "best of" guides from sites such as Eater and the Infatuation, or search for dining blogs. If you have Instagram, use that, too. "Social media makes it much easier to see what a restaurant or attraction is really like through vignettes and videos," says Spann at Spanning the Globe Tours. Find a restaurant's hashtag on Instagram, then look at the most recent photos and videos. Along with the glamorized takes, you'll see photos and videos of what the food and the place are really like.

→ Try a Tourist Pass

Carrying a discount card with some of your destination city's most popular attractions might make you feel like a tourist. But that's okay. Do some research at operators such as CityPass and Go City, and you might realize that you could save money by getting one, or end up hitting locations you otherwise might have skipped. But check to make sure the math works in your favor. If you're planning on visiting just a few highlights, such as the American Museum of Natural History and the Empire State Building in New York City, a two-choice Go City Explorer pass, $79, would cost you $3 more than paying those two admission fees separately. Alternatively, if you're planning a wall-to-wall, tour-packed itinerary in a location like Oahu in Hawaii, a three-day all-inclusive Go City pass, $229, could save you $475 vs. separate admission fees for Pearl Harbor museums, a luau, Sea Life Park, a sailing trip, and other excursions.

→ Free-Admission Smarts

Across the globe, many institutions have specific

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ADOBE STOCK; ROBERT K. CHIN-STOREFRONTS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; ADOBE STOCK;

AMNH/D. FINNIN

days (or nights) of the week or month where admission is free or donation-based. Do the research and you could save a bunch. If your family has a membership to a local museum, zoo, or botanical garden, check to see if there are reciprocal arrangements with other museums or cultural sites. The North American Reciprocal Museum Association, for example, offers free member benefits to over 1,200 institutions.

SEEK OUT THE FREEBIES

Museums worldwide often have specific times when admission is free. Plus, museums you are already a member of may have reciprocal deals with museums or other institutions abroad.

Should You Hire a Travel Adviser?

These days anyone can research and book cheap flights or cut-rate hotels, so what value does a travel adviser (aka travel agent) provide? Plenty. From helping to fix midtrip snafus to preventing you from making an itinerary error, an adviser can help you build the trip of your dreams.

WHAT DOES A TRAVEL ADVISER DO?

A good one can get you places you otherwise couldn't go, leveraging their connections and experience. If your bucket list includes truffle hunting in Tuscany or taking a vintage sailboat to a remote island in the Pacific, the right adviser will have the intel and connections to make it happen. They can also steer you away from newbie planning mistakes, such as booking an oceanfront property in Oahu, say, at a time of year when the surf's too rough to swim in.

WHAT'S A DESTINATION SPECIALIST?

You'll notice that some advisers are tagged as destination specialists for places like Hawaii, Central Europe, Italy, or the Caribbean. They generally have a deeper knowledge and experience than most in a given area, and many have been accredited through the Travel Institute, a professional group. "That destination is their passion, and they know it inside and out," says Keith Waldon, a travel adviser based in Austin, Texas. "They know the touristy areas, and can send you to the stuff that's really worth your time."

HOW MUCH DO TRAVEL ADVISERS COST?

Ask about fees up front. Some advisers work fee-free and get compensation from hotels or resorts they book you in. This can work in your favor because you may land free perks like meal vouchers or upgraded rooms. If you are wary of an adviser suggesting a property for which they get a cut, find one who works for a fee instead. Some charge a flat-rate planning fee of $100 to $500 or more, based on the trip's length and complexity. You still might save money—or get more from the money you're spending. "Travel advisers can pinpoint where you should spend or save, based on your interests," says Mary Cropper, a travel adviser who specializes in national parks in the southwestern U.S. and is based in Boston. "If I'm planning a tour of a few of the western parks, for example, I can avoid placing them in Sedona, Ariz., on a weekend, when the price will be higher." When you start to work with an adviser, you'll generally provide them with a budget; after doing the research, an adviser is likely to return to you with several itinerary options.

HOW DO I FIND ONE?

Ask friends and family to recommend someone. Or do your own research—Google professionals in your area, and look to the American Society of Travel Advisors (asta.org) for more recommendations. Virtuoso, a network of agencies with more than 20,000 advisers, is a resource geared for luxury travel. Travel + Leisure magazine also curates a list of advisers worth looking into. Once you've come up with a few options, talk to them to see whether their experience and expertise suit your needs and budget; you're also looking to see if an adviser understands your interests and style of travel.

Our Favorite Frozen Meals

WE TESTED 25 POPULAR OPTIONS AND FOUND A SURPRISING NUMBER THAT TASTE GREAT AND ARE HEALTHFUL, TOO.

BY ALTHEA CHANG-COOK
PHOTOGRAPHED BY AARON DYER

FRESH RICOTTA
RAO'S
MADE FOR HOME
MEAT LASAGNA
NO PRESERVATIVES, NO ARTIFICIAL COLORS OR FLAVORS
NET WT. 9 OZ (255g)
Tattooed Chef
BUDDHA BOWL
SWEET POTATOES AND CHILI COATED CHICKPEAS OVER RICED CAULIFLOWER WITH CREAMY TAHINI SAUCE
VEGAN
GLUTEN FREE
NO ADDED SUGAR
1 CUP VEGGIES
10g PROTEIN
NET WT 10oz (284g)
KEEP FROZEN
COOK THOROUGHLY
Healthy Choice
POWER BOWLS
Cauliflower Curry
Lentils & Cauliflower with Chard, Kale and Spinach served on top of Brown & Red Rice, Red Quinoa and Black Barley with a Spicy Curry Sauce
VEGAN
KEEP FROZEN; MUST BE COOKED THOROUGHLY
SPICE LEVEL

evol.
CHICKEN ENCHILADA BAKE
Tender cilantro lime white meat chicken with black beans, white rice, corn tortilla, cheddar cheese and roasted corn – All topped with an insanely tasty green enchilada sauce.
CHICKEN
ANTIBIOTICS
20g PROTEIN
6g FIBER
GLUTEN FREE
NET WT 9 OZ (255g)
MICROWAVE INSTRUCTIONS
Healthy Choice
simply
steamers
Chicken & Vegetable Stir Fry
Chicken Breast, Broccoli, Edamame, Carrots, Red Bell Peppers & Onions in a Sesame Soy Sauce
NOTHING ARTIFICIAL
MADE WITH 100% NATURAL* CHICKEN
SERVING SUGGESTION
PER 1 MEAL
PLANT-BASED
290
200
Healthy Choice
simply
Chicken & Vegetable Stir Fry

As Americans' taste buds have become more adventurous and varied, so have offerings in supermarket freezers. They're now stocked with meals that have global flavors and are touted as being good for you, too.

Consumer Reports' recent tests of 25 frozen meals—which included newer options as well as some classic favorites, like lasagna—found plenty of good news: Our nutrition and taste experts gave 11 of the meals top marks for nutrition and judged 13 of them to be tasty.

One reason is that these meals are less likely to rely on salt to perk up the flavor. Instead, they're spiced with ingredients like ginger, red chili pepper, and curry. They're also more likely to be brimming with vegetables, whole grains, and other plant-based foods, and to rely less on additives, thickeners, and other processed ingredients.

"The quality of frozen meals has definitely improved," says Marissa Meshulam, RD, an independent dietitian in New York City. That's partly because makers of frozen foods use higher-quality ingredients than in the past and flash freeze the meals, she says.

To get a broad view of the frozen foods landscape, we selected meals from five categories: enchiladas, Indian-inspired meals, lasagnas, dishes made with riced cauliflower in place of rice or another grain, and stir-fries.

We included five meals in each category, incorporating a mix of big brands such as Marie Callender's and Healthy Choice, and more niche ones, such as Sweet Earth and Saffron Road.

Then we let loose our panel of nutrition and taste experts.

Not all of the meals tested were standouts. So use our ratings to find

FOOD STYLING: RILEY WOFFORD. PROP STYLING: SARAH VASIL

The Tops in Each Category
Clockwise from top left: Healthy Choice Power Bowls Cauliflower Curry, Healthy Choice Simply Steamers Chicken & Vegetable Stir Fry, Evol Chicken Enchilada Bake, Tattooed Chef Buddha Bowl, and Rao's Meat Lasagna

those that offer the best mix of good flavor and healthiness—and which to leave in the deep freeze.

All About Taste

Our panelists blind-tasted the meals, comparing each with others in their category.

The meals that ranked best for taste married distinct flavors in a delicious way. For example, in Saffron Road Vegetable Biryani, the basmati rice, caramelized onions, and cashews were enhanced by ginger and brown spices (think cinnamon and clove).

Frozen meals have traditionally had a reputation for blandness, but in many of the ones we tested, the seasonings made the dishes more exciting, and healthier, too.

"A dish that is highly seasoned with lots of spices may have so much flavor that you might not miss the salt," says CR nutritionist Amy Keating, RD, who oversaw our testing.

The top-rated meals for taste were also more likely to have an element of freshness than others in their category. Two good examples: The vegetables in Saffron Road Sweet & Sour Chicken Stir Fry were flavorful and crisp, and the meat in Life Cuisine Riced Cauliflower Beef with Broccoli Bowl was tender.

The Nutrition Picture

In addition to assessing the frozen meals' flavor, Keating also weighed their nutrition—literally.

She separated and measured the frozen meal ingredients (except for

the lasagnas, because the tomato sauce couldn't be easily isolated) to determine the amount of vegetables, whole grains, and beans in each dish.

She also looked to see which of the meals are relatively low in sodium and added sugars, contain few or no processed ingredients, and are high in fiber.

Here's what we found:

› **FIBER.** The good news is that 10 of the meals we tested contained between 5 and 10 grams of fiber, making them relatively good sources of that key nutrient. According to Roxana Ehsani, RD, a board certified sports dietitian in Miami, it can be a challenge to get enough fiber every day. Women need about 25 grams of fiber per day while men need 38 grams, yet only 6 percent of Americans get the recommended amounts. Look for a frozen meal with at least 6 grams of fiber. If it doesn't meet that number, add some frozen veggies or eat it with a piece of fruit.

› **SODIUM.** While frozen meals have a reputation of being packed with sodium, most of the ones we tested didn't have a crazy amount. The daily limit for sodium is less than 2,300 mg, and Keating recommends looking for a frozen meal that has somewhere between 575 mg and 760 mg, which is 25 to 33 percent of the daily limit. Of the 25 meals we tested, nine contained less than 600 mg.

In several cases, the lower-sodium dishes also got high marks for taste, such as the Tattooed Chef Buddha Bowl and the Healthy Choice Power Bowls Cauliflower Curry, both of which we found to be nicely spiced.

The meal with the most sodium was Marie Callender's Traditional Lasagna with Meat & Sauce Bowl, which contains 71 percent (1,630 mg) of the recommended daily limit for sodium. Other dishes especially high in sodium were Real Good Foods Grande Chicken Enchiladas, with 1,010 mg, and Stouffer's Lasagna with Meat & Sauce, with 990 mg.

> The majority of the 25 meals in our test had few processed ingredients. Only four had a lengthy list.

› **ADDED SUGARS.** The American Heart Association says most adult women should consume no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugars per day and most men should have no more than 9 teaspoons. Fortunately, 15 of the 25 meals we tested had a gram or less of added sugars.

But it's still worth checking. Two meals had excessive amounts of added sugars: Sweet Earth Korean BBQ-Style Chik'n with Riced Cauliflower, with 13 grams (3 teaspoons), and Impossible Teriyaki Chicken Made From Plants, with 30 grams (7½ teaspoons—more than in 8 ounces of cola).

› **PROCESSED INGREDIENTS.** Frozen meals have long been thought to be full of processed ingredients such as additives, including protein isolates, preservatives, flavorings, and guar gum, inulin, and other added fibers. But the majority of the 25 meals in our test had few ingredients like these. Only four had a lengthy list.

For all the progress in this area, some frozen meals still contain a lot of processed ingredients. The Smart Ones Chicken Enchiladas Suiza, for example, contains isolated soy protein, modified cornstarch, xanthan gum, guar gum, locust bean gum, and the generic term "natural flavor," which companies are permitted to use without disclosing where these flavors come from. Compare that with Saffron Road Chicken Enchiladas Poblano, which has primarily whole food ingredients.

The Calorie Count

Frozen meal portion sizes can be small, sometimes seeming more like a snack or side dish than a full meal. And they are often low in calories, too, which may be great for those looking to lose weight. But going too low in calories can backfire, leaving people so hungry they "wind up snacking all night," Meshulam says.

To feel full, most people need 400 to 600 calories per meal, says Ehsani. The calories in the meals we tested range from 140 to 530. It's also best if most of those calories come from foods high in protein and fiber, which help quell hunger, Ehsani says. So look for a frozen meal with around 15 to 25 grams of protein and at least 6 grams of fiber.

Several meals in our tests do have that combination, including Evol Chicken Enchilada Bake (20 grams protein and 6 grams fiber) and Healthy Choice Power Bowls Cauliflower Curry (14 grams protein and 7 grams fiber).

If a frozen meal alone doesn't fill you up, Ehsani suggests supplementing it with healthy additions that can be just as quick to prepare as the meal itself.

Consider starting your meal with a cup of soup, a salad, a helping of hummus or guacamole with veggies and whole-grain crackers, or a handful of nuts. Or serve the dish over some cooked frozen veggies or whole grains, such as brown rice, quinoa, or bulgur. Another option: For dessert, have a plate of fruit and a little cheese—a good protein and fiber combination.

Best & Worst Frozen Meals

The meals we tested are grouped by category and ranked in order of nutrition, followed by taste. Meals with the same scores are listed alphabetically. The recommended meals are those with the best combination of nutrition and taste, according to our experts.

Chicken Enchiladas

Enchiladas were a mixed bag. Two were good combos of taste and nutrition, with tasty corn tortillas and beans, but the others, not so much. Real Good Foods Grande Chicken Enchiladas—a mashed chicken filling in a "tortilla" made from cheese and chicken—was one of the lowest-scoring meals overall.

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Evol Chicken Enchilada Bake

$4.50, 9 oz.

The white meat chicken, black beans, and white rice are in a tasty tomatillo sauce, and there's a hint of lime. The corn tortilla was slightly soggy.

CALORIES: **380** SAT. FAT: **6 g** CARBS: **43 g** FIBER: **6 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **20 g** SODIUM: **510 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Saffron Road Chicken Enchiladas Poblano

$6.00, 10 oz.

Chicken and spinach are in corn tortillas and topped with a tangy green pepper sauce. The rice is well seasoned, but the beans are a bit too smoky.

CALORIES: **420** SAT. FAT: **4 g** CARBS: **56 g** FIBER: **4 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **18 g** SODIUM: **660 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

El Monterey Chicken Enchiladas [1]

$5.50, 10.25 oz.

The well-balanced flavors, tender chicken, and tasty cheese sauce earned high marks for taste. But it's light on the black beans, corn, and red pepper.

CALORIES: **530** SAT. FAT: **12 g** CARBS: **51 g** FIBER: **2 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **21 g** SODIUM: **890 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Smart Ones Chicken Enchiladas Suiza [1]

$3.00, 9 oz.

This dish has smoky but mushy chicken, white rice, and few veggies. The cheese was the only flavor standout.

CALORIES: **290** SAT. FAT: **2.5 g** CARBS: **46 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **NA** PROTEIN: **12 g** SODIUM: **780 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Real Good Foods Grande Chicken Enchiladas

$5.50, 9 oz.

This is quite salty. The "tortilla" is made of cheese and chicken and filled with mashed chicken. The tomatillo sauce has some tang.

CALORIES: **360** SAT. FAT: **8 g** CARBS: **5 g** FIBER: **2 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **38 g** SODIUM: **1,010 mg**

Indian-Inspired Meals

Indian-inspired meals—rich in ginger, turmeric, and other spices—were winners for taste and nutrition. All those flavors helped keep sodium levels lower, and all the meals had ample amounts of vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Healthy Choice Power Bowls Cauliflower Curry [2]

$6.00, 9.9 oz.

This is a nice mix of cauliflower florets, lentils, and al dente whole grains. The curry and chili sauce give it some spicy heat. It's fairly low in sodium.

CALORIES: **290** SAT. FAT: **0.5 g** CARBS: **50 g** FIBER: **7 g** ADDED SUGARS: **2 g** PROTEIN: **14 g** SODIUM: **400 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Amy's Indian Vegetable Korma [2]

$6.00, 9.5 oz.

The fragrant brown rice, nuts, peas, beans, lentils, and curried potatoes and other veggies blend well together to create an interesting dish.

CALORIES: **330** SAT. FAT: **3.5 g** CARBS: **46 g** FIBER: **8 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **9 g** SODIUM: **680 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Saffron Road Vegetable Biryani

$6.00, 10 oz.

Made with chickpeas, cauliflower florets, carrots, peas, and white basmati rice, this is a flavorful dish with some spicy heat.

CALORIES: **460** SAT. FAT: **2 g** CARBS: **67 g** FIBER: **6 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **10 g** SODIUM: **650 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Sweet Earth Curry Tiger [2]

$6.50, 9 oz.

A blend of seitan, lentils, whole grains, and veggies, this meal is just okay. The coconut milk sauce is a little sweet, and the veggies are slightly soft.

CALORIES: **360** SAT. FAT: **7 g** CARBS: **40 g** FIBER: **8 g** ADDED SUGARS: **5 g** PROTEIN: **19 g** SODIUM: **360 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Trader Joe's Paneer Tikka Masala with Spinach Basmati Rice

$4.00, 9 oz.

This contains cheese in a tomato-based masala sauce with a little spicy heat and rice. It's light on the veggies.

CALORIES: **410** SAT. FAT: **6 g** CARBS: **39 g** FIBER: **6 g** ADDED SUGARS: **1 g** PROTEIN: **15 g** SODIUM: **760 mg**

Best & Worst Frozen Meals

continued

Lasagnas

Lasagnas were nutritional duds, devoid of whole grains and veggies (other than tomato sauce), and some were high in sodium. But the best-tasting ones, Rao's and Trader Joe's, were also the lowest in sodium.

NUTRITION SCORE: !

TASTE SCORE: ^

Rao's Meat Lasagna
$7.00, 9 oz.

Rao's lasagna has a good amount of ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. The tomato sauce is flavorful and contains finely ground meat.

CALORIES: **430** SAT. FAT: **10 g** CARBS: **36 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **27 g** SODIUM: **690 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: !

TASTE SCORE: ^

Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Family Style Meat Lasagna [3]
$6.50, 32 oz.

This fresh-tasting dish has plentiful cheese and a meaty, slightly spicy tomato sauce with browned beef and pork.

CALORIES: **320** SAT. FAT: **7 g** CARBS: **26 g** FIBER: **2 g** ADDED SUGARS: **<1 g** PROTEIN: **21 g** SODIUM: **720 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: v

TASTE SCORE: !

Stouffer's Lasagna with Meat & Sauce
$4.50, 10.5 oz.

There's not much cheese filling in this one. It's mostly pasta—three layers of thick noodles—and meaty tomato sauce with mozzarella on top.

CALORIES: **360** SAT. FAT: **6 g** CARBS: **42 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **1 g** PROTEIN: **22 g** SODIUM: **990 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: v

TASTE SCORE: !

Udi's Gluten Free Lasagna with Meat Sauce [3]
$14.00, 28 oz.

You get lots of cheese, but the noodles are thin and soft, and the sauce is a tad sour.

CALORIES: **370** SAT. FAT: **11 g** CARBS: **27 g** FIBER: **2 g** ADDED SUGARS: **1 g** PROTEIN: **16 g** SODIUM: **800 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: vv

TASTE SCORE: v

Marie Callender's Traditional Lasagna with Meat & Sauce Bowl
$4.00, 11.75 oz.

This fairly salty bowl has mini lasagna noodles, tomato sauce with chewy beef crumbles, and little cheese.

CALORIES: **430** SAT. FAT: **6 g** CARBS: **51 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **5 g** PROTEIN: **26 g** SODIUM: **1,630 mg**

Riced Cauliflower Meals

Riced cauliflower meals fared pretty well. All had a cup or more of vegetables, and had less than a third of the daily sodium limit. Most also tasted good, especially those with meat, like Healthy Choice Power Bowls Greek-Style Chicken—surprising, because meat in frozen meals can be tough.

NUTRITION SCORE: ^^

TASTE SCORE: ^

✓ Tattooed Chef Buddha Bowl [2]
$5.00, 10 oz.

This mix of chickpeas, kale, sweet potatoes, and crunchy cauliflower comes in a very spicy tahini sauce.

CALORIES: **320** SAT. FAT: **2.5 g** CARBS: **33 g** FIBER: **9 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **10 g** SODIUM: **310 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: ^^

TASTE SCORE: !

Trader Joe's Chickenless Riced Cauliflower Stir Fry [2][3]
$4.00, 16 oz.

Here's a decent-tasting mix of "chicken" and vegetables in a mild soy-ginger sauce. The "chicken" is chewy and sometimes slightly tough.

CALORIES: **140** SAT. FAT: **1 g** CARBS: **15 g** FIBER: **10 g** ADDED SUGARS: **0 g** PROTEIN: **7 g** SODIUM: **460 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: ^

TASTE SCORE: ^

✓ Healthy Choice Power Bowls Greek-Style Chicken [2]
$6.00, 9.5 oz.

This fresh-tasting mix of white meat chicken, cauliflower, and zucchini comes in a mild Mediterranean dressing.

CALORIES: **170** SAT. FAT: **2 g** CARBS: **10 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **1 g** PROTEIN: **20 g** SODIUM: **590 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: ^

TASTE SCORE: ^

✓ Life Cuisine Riced Cauliflower Beef with Broccoli Bowl [2]
$4.50, 10 oz.

This dish has tender beef and ample red peppers. But the broccoli is slightly soft and the sauce is a bit watery.

CALORIES: **200** SAT. FAT: **2 g** CARBS: **20 g** FIBER: **5 g** ADDED SUGARS: **5 g** PROTEIN: **13 g** SODIUM: **720 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE: !

TASTE SCORE: !

Sweet Earth Korean BBQ-Style Chik'n with Riced Cauliflower [2]
$6.00, 9 oz.

This meal has cauliflower, brown rice, soft carrots, peapods, and edamame in a sweet/spicy sauce.

CALORIES: **330** SAT. FAT: **0.5 g** CARBS: **54 g** FIBER: **5 g** ADDED SUGARS: **13 g** PROTEIN: **15 g** SODIUM: **550 mg**

[1] This meal contains more processed ingredients than others in our test. [2] This meal contains more than 1 cup of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, or beans combined. [3] This is a multiserving meal. The nutrition information is for the amount noted on the package as one serving.

Asian-Inspired Chicken Stir-Fries

Stir-fries might seem healthy, but not most of the ones we tested. Many had added sugars. And Michelina's Stir Fry Rice & Vegetables with White Chicken and Trader Joe's Chicken Fried Rice were heavy on white rice but light on veggies. Michelina's and Impossible Teriyaki Chicken Made From Plants contained several processed ingredients.

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Healthy Choice Simply Steamers Chicken & Vegetable Stir Fry [2]

$4.00, 9.25 oz.

The veggies in this are a bit soft, and it has a few tough chicken pieces. The mild soy-ginger sauce improves the flavor.

CALORIES: **200** SAT. FAT: **1 g** CARBS: **16 g** FIBER: **4 g** ADDED SUGARS: **6 g** PROTEIN: **23 g** SODIUM: **580 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Saffron Road Sweet & Sour Chicken Stir Fry

$6.00, 10 oz.

This fresh-tasting dish has white meat chicken and bell peppers in a sweet and sour sauce with pineapple flavor, but it's short on the vegetables.

CALORIES: **340** SAT. FAT: **0.5 g** CARBS: **54 g** FIBER: **1 g** ADDED SUGARS: **7 g** PROTEIN: **16 g** SODIUM: **590 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Michelina's Stir Fry Rice & Vegetables with White Chicken [1]

$2.00, 8 oz.

The dish is mostly white rice with sparse chewy chicken pieces and few veggies. The soy-based sauce is tasty.

CALORIES: **390** SAT. FAT: **3.5 g** CARBS: **50 g** FIBER: **2 g** ADDED SUGARS: **1 g** PROTEIN: **10 g** SODIUM: **860 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Trader Joe's Chicken Fried Rice [3]

$3.50, 20 oz.

This dish is mostly white rice with sparse, slightly crisp veggies and unappetizing-looking dark meat chicken pieces. Lightly seasoned.

CALORIES: **260** SAT. FAT: **1 g** CARBS: **47 g** FIBER: **1 g** ADDED SUGARS: **2 g** PROTEIN: **9 g** SODIUM: **650 mg**

NUTRITION SCORE

TASTE SCORE

Impossible Teriyaki Chicken Made From Plants [1]

$6.00, 9 oz.

It has peas, carrots, pineapple, white rice, and lots of sweet and sour sauce. The "chicken" is tasty, but you can tell it's not the real thing.

CALORIES: **400** SAT. FAT: **0.5 g** CARBS: **76 g** FIBER: **3 g** ADDED SUGARS: **30 g** PROTEIN: **12 g** SODIUM: **830 mg**

WORSE — BETTER

CR RECOMMENDED

How to Read a Frozen Meal Label

While our tests provide a good overview of frozen meals, there are lots of similar products packed into the freezer case at your grocery store. Here's how to find a nutritious one.

- **Look beyond the claims.** Labels like "plant-based," "organic," and "natural" on the package don't necessarily mean the meal inside is actually good for you. Those with a USDA organic label do have ingredients grown without most pesticides, for example, but could still contain plenty of sodium or sugars. And "plant-based" meals may not be high in fiber and may have a lot of highly processed ingredients. So check the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients lists to see what's really in the food.
- **Check the Daily Value column on food labels.** Ideally, a meal should have no more than one-third of the DV for added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat and at least 20 percent of the DV for fiber, says CR nutritionist Amy Keating, RD.
- **Watch out for processed ingredients.** While many of the meals we tested had mostly whole foods, some had a lot of additives. Fewer is better. "When there are alternatives without them, it makes sense to avoid additives—such as thickeners like carrageenan or xanthan gum, or artificial coloring—since their effects on health are not fully known," Keating says.
- **Aim for whole grains.** Instead of refined grains like white rice or pasta, search for meals that contain higher-fiber carbs like quinoa or farro. They tend to have more fiber and other nutrients than refined carbohydrates, and can keep you fuller longer, says Marissa Meshulam, RD. Meals with legumes and several veggies in them are also good picks.

CR's Home Entertainment Buying Guide

We've got the latest ratings on TVs, smart speakers, headphones, and more so you can get the perfect setup for your home at the best prices.

BY **ALLEN ST. JOHN** AND **JAMES K. WILLCOX**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **MARIO WAGNER**

Once upon a time, enjoying a great home entertainment system required a lot of money for the equipment and often the help of professional installers to make it all work together. But today, top-quality entertainment is much more affordable–and far easier to set up.

Take TVs. You can find big-screen 65-inch sets recommended by Consumer Reports selling for under $1,000. Add in a high-quality soundbar and your living room turns into a home movie theater with multichannel audio that surrounds you–and in some cases even projects overhead–for a truly immersive experience.

When it comes to music, you can get terrific-sounding audio from wireless speakers that connect to your WiFi network and even let you sync music throughout the house. That kind of multiroom audio used to be a splurge, requiring products and wiring that were hard to set up. No longer.

Many newer entertainment products can work together, and they have multiple roles. For instance, the same smart speakers that play your tunes can also tell you the weather or turn on the lights. You just need to ask, using voice commands.

One thing has become trickier, though: sifting through the myriad choices. To start, consult the ratings on the following 21 pages, which cover hundreds of CR-tested products that can help you bring convenient, affordable, and luxurious entertainment into your home.

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SOUNDBARS PAGE 84

TELEVISIONS PAGE 86

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HEADPHONES

On- and over-ear headphones can provide music lovers with an inexpensive route to great sound, handily outperforming speakers that need to fill an entire room with music. They also feel more luxurious than earbuds, especially when you're relaxing at home, immersed in your favorite albums.

OUR ADVICE

If you'll be wearing your headphones when you're sharing space with others, go with a closed-back model, which that doesn't leak much sound. Headphones with active noise canceling can subdue outside noises. And many models let you reduce the level of noise canceling or even pipe in outside sound for when you take the headphones out of the house.

But if you'll be using the headphones most often when you're alone, consider open-back models, which have mesh instead of solid plastic on the outside of the housing. The best of these can make your music sound more natural, closer to the experience of live music.

Finally, while earbuds often get lost or broken, on- or over-ear headphones can deliver years of great sound. If you're going to splurge anywhere, headphones could be the place to do it.

WORDS OF CAUTION

When checking out headphones in a store, bring some favorite songs, ones where you can hear the subtleties. And beware of bass-heavy models. These might sound good at first but will become tiresome after a few days.

EXPERT TIP

Fit matters. Some headphones might be too tight or chafe your ears, so try before you buy. Whether you buy online or in person, find a vendor with a good return policy.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results		Features				
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Sound quality	Noise reduction	Type	Design	Integrated microphone	Call connect, disconnect control	Integrated volume control
NOISE-CANCELING WIRELESS HOME/STUDIO-STYLE HEADPHONES											
Bose Noise Cancelling Headphones 700	88	$330	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Apple AirPods Max	81	$550	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Bowers & Wilkins PX7 S2	79	$400	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Shure AONIC 50	78	$300	–	–	⏫	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Bang & Olufsen Beoplay HX	78	$500	🔼	!	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Bose QuietComfort 45	77	$280	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Sony WH-1000XM4	77	$350	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Sony WH-1000XM5	77	$400	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Microsoft Surface Headphone 2	74	$250	–	–	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results: Predicted reliability	Survey Results: Owner satisfaction	Test Results: Sound quality	Test Results: Noise reduction	Features: Type	Features: Design	Features: Integrated microphone	Features: Call connect, disconnect control	Features: Integrated volume control
NOISE-CANCELING WIRELESS HOME/STUDIO-STYLE HEADPHONES *Continued*											
Beats by Dre Beats Studio3 Wireless	74	$350	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Monoprice BT-300ANC	74	$45	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Soundcore by Anker Life Q20	73	$60	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Shure AONIC 40	73	$250	—	—	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Cleer Alpha	73	$200	—	—	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Beats by Dre Solo Pro	72	$300	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	On-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
JBL Live 660NC	72	$170	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Marshall Monitor II A.N.C.	71	$300	—	—	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
Puro Sound Labs PuroPro	71	$150	—	—	🔼	⏫	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
JBL Tune 660NC	71	$80	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	On-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
JBL Live 460NC	69	$100	➖	➖	🔼	⏫	On-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
WIRELESS HOME/STUDIO-STYLE STEREO HEADPHONES											
V-Moda Crossfade 2 Wireless	70	$180	—	—	🔼	NA	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
JBL Tune 510BT	67	$50	➖	➖	🔼	NA	On-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	●
HOME/STUDIO-STYLE STEREO HEADPHONES											
Grado RS2x	91	$550	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	On-ear with headband	Open air			
Grado SR225x	86	$225	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	On-ear with headband	Open air			
Grado SR80x	86	$125	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	On-ear with headband	Open Air			
Grado SR325x	86	$295	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	On-ear with headband	Open Air			
Grado SR125x	82	$175	⏫	⏫	⏫	NA	On-ear with headband	Open air			
Grado SR60x	78	$100	⏫	⏫	🔼	NA	On-ear with headband	Open air			
Shure SRH1440	77	$280	➖	➖	⏫	NA	Over-ear with headband	Open air			
Sony MDR-1AM2	75	$250	⏫	➖	🔼	NA	Over-ear with headband	Closed	●	●	
Audio-Technica ATH-M50x	74	$170	⏫	⏫	🔼	NA	Over-ear with headband	Closed			

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/headphones.

HOW WE TEST: **Overall Score** is based on the performance of the product in all of our tests. **Predicted reliability** is based on estimated problem rates for newly purchased headphones, adjusted for service contract status, within the first two years of ownership. **Owner satisfaction** icons are based on the proportion of members who are extremely likely to recommend their headphone's brand to their friends and family. Models with a dash (—) indicate that we have insufficient data for the brand, and these models get the category average score. **Sound quality** represents the tonal accuracy, clarity, detail, ambience, and dynamics of the audio reproduced by the headphones. **Noise reduction** represents how well the headphones reduce ambient noise when the active noise cancellation feature is activated. **Price** is approximate retail.

SMART SPEAKERS

Smart speakers that use a digital assistant (Amazon Alexa, for example) will perform their smart functions almost identically—from delivering the news to controlling a door lock. What differentiates them, increasingly, is their sound quality.

OUR ADVICE

The smart speakers with the best audio quality have gone beyond just sounding good for smart speakers—now they can really do justice to your favorite music. (Check out the sound quality scores in our ratings.) But not everyone is looking to play music from their new speaker. If you simply want to set timers in the kitchen or ask for occasional weather reports, you can buy a basic smart speaker for less than $50.

WORDS OF CAUTION

The leading smart speaker and voice-activated digital assistant companies—Amazon, Apple, and Google—all have their own music streaming services, and compatibility with rival platforms is often less than stellar. If most of your music comes from one of those companies, sticking with its own devices could make sense.

Think carefully before buying a smart speaker with a screen. In the kitchen, these can let you watch cooking videos, but they also occupy valuable counter space. While they make video calls easy, the built-in cameras may cause privacy concerns. In addition, these models tend to fall short in sound quality.

EXPERT TIP

If you already own a great-sounding wireless speaker, you can add "smart" functionality by pairing it via Bluetooth with a cheap device such as Amazon's Echo Dot or Google's Nest Mini.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features	
			Sound quality	Versatility	Ease of use	Supported digital assistant(s)	Dimensions, HxWxD (in.)
SMART SPEAKERS							
Amazon Echo Studio	68	$175	▲	▲▲	▲	Alexa	8.25 x 6.75 x 8.75
Sonos Move	68	$400	▲	▲	▲	Alexa, Google	9.5 x 6.25 x 5.25
Amazon Echo Show 10	67	$250	!	▲	▲▲	Alexa	9.25 x 10 x 6.5
Amazon Echo (4th Gen) w/ Echo Sub	67	$290	!	▲▲	▲	Alexa	5.25 x 5.75 x 5.75
Apple HomePod (2nd Gen)	66	$300	▲	▲	▲	Siri	6.75 x 5.75 x 5.75
Bose Home Speaker 500	65	$380	▲	▲	▲▲	Alexa	8 x 6.7 x 4.3
Amazon Echo (4th Gen)	65	$80	!	▲▲	▲	Alexa	5.25 x 5.75 x 5.75
Bose Home Speaker 300	65	$200	▲	▲	▲	Alexa, Google	6.25 x 5.75 x 6
Bose Portable Home	65	$400	▲	▲	▲	Alexa, Google	7.5 x 5 x 5.25

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features	
			Sound quality	Versatility	Ease of use	Supported digital assistant(s)	Dimensions, HxWxD (in.)
Amazon Echo Show 8 (2nd Gen)	64	$75				Alexa	5.5 x 8 x 5
Sonos One (Gen 2)	64	$220				Alexa	6.5 x 4.75 x 4.75
Google Nest Hub Max	63	$230				Google	7.25 x 9.75 x 5
Google Nest Audio	63	$100				Google	7 x 5 x 3.5
Marshall Uxbridge Voice	62	$200				Alexa	6.5 x 5 x 6.5
Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin	61	$800				Alexa	8.3 x 25.5 x 8.3
Marshall Stanmore II Voice	60	$250				Alexa	7.68 x 13.78 x 7.28
JBL Link Music	60	$40				Google	5.25 x 4.5 x 5.75
Belkin Soundform Elite	59	$170				Google	6.5 x 6.25 x 6.5
Bang & Olufsen Beosound A1 (2nd Gen)	57	$280				Alexa	2 x 5.25 x 6.25
Amazon Echo Show 15	56	$250				Alexa	10 x 16 x 1.5
JBL Link Portable	54	$60				Google	7.5 x 3.5 x 3.5
Sonos Roam	54	$180				Alexa, Google	6.75 x 2.5 x 2.5
Google Nest Hub (2nd Gen)	54	$100				Google	4.75 x 7 x 3.25
Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen)	53	$50				Alexa	3.5 x 4 x 4
Facebook Portal+ 14"	53	$295				Alexa, Portal	10 x 12.5 x 4
Amazon Echo Dot (3rd Gen)	53	$25				Alexa	1.7 x 3.9 x 3.9
Amazon Echo Dot (5th Gen) w/ clock	52	$50				Alexa	3.5 x 4 x 4
iHome AV14	50	$100				Alexa	4.1 x 7.8 x 4.1
Apple HomePod Mini	50	$100				Siri	3.5 x 4 x 4
Amazon Echo Show 5 (2nd Gen)	49	$45				Alexa	3.5 x 6 x 4
Solis SO-2000	49	$130				Google	7.25 x 6 x 6.5
Lenovo Smart Display 8"	48	$220				Google	5.6 x 10.3 x 4.3
Lenovo Smart Clock 2 w/ Wireless Charging Dock	45	$50				Google	3.75 x 4.5 x 3.5
Google Nest Mini (2nd Gen)	44	$50				Google	1.75 x 3.75 x 4.5
Lenovo Smart Clock Essential	44	$25				Google	2.75 x 4.75 x 3.25
Lenovo Smart Clock	42	$25				Google	3 x 4.5 x 4.75
iLive Platinum Concierge	38	$65				Alexa	7.25 x 3 x 4.25

Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/smartpeakers.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on the results of all our tests. **Sound quality** measures tonal accuracy and the ability to reproduce fine sonic detail. **Versatility** is based on useful features. **Ease of use** refers to setup and use of controls. **Price** is approximate retail.

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

WIRELESS SPEAKERS

Today's best speakers deliver stellar sound without the old-school clutter of wires. Unlike many other devices, they rarely become obsolete. A great speaker you buy today should deliver satisfying sound for years to come.

OUR ADVICE

If you've got a large home, consider speakers with multiroom capability, like models from Sonos or Denon. Over time you can expand a single speaker into a full-home system that lets you sync your music throughout your house or beam different content to separate rooms using a smartphone app. If you choose one of the many speaker models that can be paired in stereo, you've got a solid path if you want to improve your sound quality later on.

Wireless speakers can work through your WiFi network, Bluetooth, or both. Bluetooth-only models tend to be portable, ideal for going to the beach, but home speakers with WiFi connections tend to sound best, and they make it easier to pipe music throughout your home.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Unless you plan to host parties all of the time, it's best to take a pass on models with unnecessary bells and whistles, like LED lighting effects and karaoke inputs. And it's wise to look for medium-sized speakers. Those that are too big tend to be thumpy and bass-heavy, while tiny ones usually can't deliver enough room-filling volume.

EXPERT TIP

For the best sound, place your speakers at ear level, and if you've got a stereo pair, spread them apart at an equal height from the floor and equidistant from both back and side walls.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features		
			Sound quality	Ease of use	Versatility	Wireless type	Dimensions, HxWxD (in.)	Optional multi-room sharing
HOME WIRELESS & BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS								
Edifier S1000MKII	75	$400	⇈	⌃	!	Bluetooth	13.5 x 8 x 12	
Edifier S1000DB	75	$360	⇈	⌃	!	Bluetooth	13.5 x 7.5 x 11	
Sonos Five	74	$550	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi	8 x 14.5 x 6	●
Edifier R2000DB	73	$330	⌃	⌃	!	Bluetooth	11.5 x 7 x 10.5	
Como Audio Solo	72	$115	!	⇈	⇈	WiFi, Bluetooth	5 x 22.3 x 5	●
Edifier S2000MKIII	72	$550	⌃	⌃	!	Bluetooth	13.5 x 7.8 x 12	
AirPulse A100	70	$1,000	⌃	⌃	⌃	Bluetooth	11.4 x 6.3 x 13.5	
Denon Home 250	69	$400	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	8.75 x 11.75 x 6	●
Denon Home 350	69	$500	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	9 x 14.75 x 8	●

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features		
			Sound quality	Ease of use	Versatility	Wireless type	Dimensions, HxWxD (in.)	Optional multi-room sharing
✓ **Marshall** Woburn III	68	$450	⌃	⌃⌃	I	Bluetooth	12.5 x 15.75 x 8	
✓ **Peachtree Audio** M25	68	$450	⌃	I	⌃	Bluetooth	10.25 x 6.75 x 8.25	
✓ **Denon** Home 150	66	$250	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	7.36 x 4.72 x 4.72	●
✓ **Sonos** One SL	64	$200	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi	6.5 x 4.75 x 5.75	●
✓ **Audio Pro** C10 MKII	64	$450	⌃	⌃	⌃⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	7 x 12 x 8.5	●
✓ **Insignia** Powered (Pair) (NS-HBTSS116)	63	$150	I	⌃	⌃	Bluetooth	11 x 6.5 x 8.5	
✓ **Bowers & Wilkins** Formation Flex	62	$500	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	8.5 x 4.75 x 6	●
✓ **Kanto** Yu	62	$300	⌃	I	I	Bluetooth	9 x 5.5 x 11.75	
✓ **Bowers & Wilkins** Formation Wedge	61	$1,000	⌃	⌃	⌃	Bluetooth/WiFi	9.1 x 17.3 x 9.6	●
✓ **Ikea** Symfonisk Bookshelf (gen 2)	61	$120	⌃	⌃	⌃	WiFi	12 x 4 x 6	●
✓ **Ikea** Symfonisk Lamp	61	$250	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi	15.75 x 8.5 x 8.5	●
✓ **Klipsch** The Three II	61	$480	I	⌃	I	Bluetooth	7 x 13.75 x 10	
Klipsch The Fives	60	$525	I	⌃⌃	I	Bluetooth	12.75 x 6.5 x 10	
Ikea Symfonisk Picture Frame (404.873.20)	60	$260	I	I	⌃	WiFi	16 x 22.5 x 2.25	●
Marshall Acton III	59	$280	I	⌃⌃	I	Bluetooth	6.75 x 10.25 x 6	
Marshall Stanmore III	59	$380	I	⌃⌃	I	Bluetooth	8 x 14 x 7.5	
Solis SO-6000	58	$125	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	5.75 x 9.5 x 8.75	●
Marshall Acton II	57	$250	I	⌃	I	Bluetooth	6.5 x 10.25 x 7.5	
Audioengine A1-MR	57	$230	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi	6 x 4 x 5.25	●
Klipsch The One II	54	$190	I	I	I	Bluetooth	6.25 x 12.75 x 5.25	
Ikea Eneby (gen 2)	54	$80	I	I	I	Bluetooth	10.25 x 8 x 5	
Audioengine HD3	54	$350	I	I	I	Bluetooth	9 x 4.25 x 7.25	
Sony SRS-RA5000	46	$400	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	9 x 9 x 9	●
House of Marley Get Together Duo	42	$140	I	I	I	Bluetooth	7.9 x 5.1 x 4.1	
Sony SRS-RA3000	41	$200	I	⌃	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	9.75 x 5.75 x 6.25	●
Tivoli Audio Sphera	40	$205	I	I	⌃	WiFi, Bluetooth	2 x 7.9 x 7.9	●
Fluance Ai41	40	$200	⌄	I	⌃	Bluetooth	11 x 6.75 x 8.5	
Audioengine B2	39	$200	I	I	I	Bluetooth	4.25 x 12.5 x 8	
Sony MHC-V13	36	$250	⌄	⌃	I	Bluetooth	23.6 x 11.4 x 11.9	
Samsung T70 Giga Party	27	$645	⌄	⌃	I	Bluetooth	35 x 18.75 x 17.75	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/wireless-speakers.

HOW WE TEST: **Overall Score** is based on the results of all our tests. **Sound quality** measures tonal accuracy and the ability to reproduce fine sonic detail. **Ease of use** refers to setup and use of controls. **Versatility** is based on useful features. **Price** is approximate retail.

SOUNDBARS

Many TVs these days have great picture quality but fall short when it comes to audio, which is especially noticeable when you're watching a movie with a dramatic soundtrack. The easy fix? A soundbar. Most models will improve on a typical TV's sound quality, and many can supply a surround-sound experience.

OUR ADVICE

Most soundbars have several speakers, plus the electronics to power them, in one thin enclosure that you connect to your TV. Some have a separate subwoofer, usually wireless, and a few have—or let you add—rear speakers to create a full surround-sound system. Want an even more immersive experience? Get a soundbar that supports Dolby Atmos or DTS:X audio, which can make the sound seem to come from overhead as well as all around you. Soundbars with built-in WiFi can directly access online music services such as Pandora and Spotify.

Many models now are smart speakers that let you use voice commands to raise the volume, change inputs, and sometimes control a TV or other smart devices in your home. A few models also have a built-in streaming player (typically a Roku) for streaming shows and movies right from the soundbar.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Some basic models, called 2.0- or 2.1-channel systems, lack the dedicated center-channel speaker found on 3.0- or 3.1-channel models. But that center channel can make dialogue easier to understand.

EXPERT TIP

Soundbars with similar scores can sound quite different, depending on factors including your room size. Make sure you can exchange your soundbar if you don't love it once you set it up.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results				Features			
			Sound quality	Ease of use (TV)	Ease of use (features)	Versatility	No. of channels	Wireless subwoofer	HDMI (in/out)	Bluetooth (in/out)
FULL-FEATURED SOUNDBARS										
Sonos Arc Soundbar	73	$900	▲	▲▲	▲▲	!	5.0.2 non-surround, expandable to 5.1.2 surround	Optional	0/1	No/No
Samsung HW-S801B/ZA	72	$700	▲	▲	!	▲	3.1.2 non-surround, expandable to 5.1.4 surround	•	0/1	Yes/No
Samsung HW-B67C	72	$260	▲	▲	!	▲	5.1 surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Bose Soundbar 700	72	$450	▲	▲	▲	▲	2.0 non-surround, expandable to 4.1 surround	Optional	0/1	Yes/No
Samsung HW-Q700B/ZA	71	$550	▲	▲	▲	▲	3.1.2 non-surround, expandable to 5.1.4 surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Vizio M512e-K6	70	$500	▲	▲	!	▲	5.1.2 surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Sonos Beam (Gen 2)	69	$450	▲	▲▲	▲▲	!	5.0 non-surround, expandable to 5.1 surround	Optional	0/1	No/No
Vizio Elevate - P514a-H6	68	$1,000	▲	!	▼	▲	5.1.4 surround	•	2/1	Yes/No

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results				Features			
			Sound quality	Ease of use (TV)	Ease of use (features)	Versatility	No. of channels	Wireless subwoofer	HDMI (in/out)	Bluetooth (in/out)
FULL-FEATURED SOUNDBARS *Continued*										
Sonos Ray	65	$280	⌃	⌃⌃	⌃⌃	–	2.0 non-surround, expandable to 5.1 surround	Optional	0/0	No/No
Polk Audio True Surround III	60	$600	–	⌃⌃	⌃	–	5.1 surround	•	0/1	Yes/No
LG SP8YA	60	$400	–	⌃	–	⌃	3.1.2 non-surround, expandable to 5.1.2 surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
LG SP9YA	60	$1,000	–	⌃	–	⌃	5.1.2 surround, expandable to 7.1.2 surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Bose Smart Soundbar 900	60	$700	–	–	⌃	⌃	5.0.2 non-surround, expandable to 7.2.2 surround	Optional	0/1	Yes/Yes
Samsung HW-Q600B/ZA	60	$450	–	⌃	–	⌃	3.1.2 non-surround, expandable to 5.1.2 non-surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Denon Home Sound Bar 550	60	$500	–	⌃	–	⌃⌃	4.0 non-surround, expandable to 6.1 surround (pending future update)	Optional	1/1	Yes/No
Polk Audio Magnifi Max SR	60	$400	–	⌃	⌄	⌃⌃	5.1 surround	•	3/1	Yes/No
Yamaha YAS-209	60	$350	–	⌃	⌃	–	2.1 non-surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Samsung HW-S61B	59	$200	–	⌃	–	⌃	5.0 non-surround, expandable to 7.1 surround	Optional	0/1	Yes/No
Samsung HW-S60B/ZA	59	$300	–	⌃	–	⌃	5.0 non-surround, expandable to 7.1 surround	Optional	0/1	Yes/No
Definitive Technology Studio 3D Mini	57	$900	–	⌃	–	⌃	4.1 non-surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
BASIC SOUNDBARS										
Yamaha SR-B20A	60	$200	–	⌃	⌃	⌃	2.0 non-surround, expandable to 2.1 non-surround	NA	0/1	Yes/No
Vizio M213AD-K8	60	$150	–	⌃	–	⌃⌃	2.0 non-surround	NA	0/1	Yes/No
Denon DHT-S217	60	$250	–	⌃	–	⌃	2.0 non-surround, expandable to 2.1 non-surround		1/Yes	Yes/No
LG S65Q	60	$400	⌃	⌃	⌄	⌃	3.1 non-surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Denon DHT-S517	58	$450	–	⌃	–	⌃	3.1.2 non-surround	•	1/1	Yes/No
Vizio SB3221n-J6	58	$130	–	⌃	–	⌃	2.1 non-surround	•	0/0	Yes/No
Creative Stage 2.1	57	$90	–	–	–	⌃	2.1 non-surround		0/1	Yes/No
Vizio V214x-K6	56	$150	–	–	⌄	⌃	2.1 non-surround	•	0/0	Yes/No
Vizio M21d-H8R	55	$140	–	⌃	⌄	⌃⌃	2.0 non-surround	NA	1/1	Yes/No

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/soundbars.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on the results of all our tests. **Sound quality** measures tonal accuracy and the ability to reproduce fine sonic detail. **Ease of use (features)** refers to setup and use of the soundbar with non-TV features. **Versatility** is based on useful features. **Price** is approximate retail.

TELEVISIONS

A big-screen TV is the heart of many home entertainment systems. If you haven't been TV shopping in a while, you may be surprised to find that 65-inch sets are now quite common—and surprisingly affordable. Nearly all large models are now 4K smart TVs, which connect to your WiFi network for streaming.

OUR ADVICE

TVs keep getting better, even as they become more affordable. OLED TVs, which have long topped our ratings with deep, rich black levels and essentially unlimited viewing angles, now cost about the same as the best LCD sets. And those LCD models now rival OLED TVs for picture quality. That means there are more great choices for shoppers with larger budgets, while quality has been rising for many less expensive sets, too.

These days, most sets support high dynamic range (HDR) video content, which can produce brighter, more vibrant pictures, closer to what we see in real life.

Just about all new TVs are smart models with wireless internet connections. Many of these accept voice commands through their remote controls.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Don't pay extra for an 8K set because these TVs are still pricey and there's almost no 8K content available. Many televisions now support HDR, but not all do a good job at it—check our ratings for HDR performance. You can skip the extended warranty because TVs from major brands tend to be very reliable.

EXPERT TIP

Don't leave your TV in its default picture setting. Instead, use Movie Mode or Filmmaker Mode (if the set has it) to get the most natural-looking picture without having to tweak lots of detailed settings.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
70-INCH AND LARGER TVs															
LG OLED77G2PUA	86	$3,800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❗	🔼	OLED	4
Sony XR-77A80K	85	$2,700	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	❗	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	❗	🔼	OLED	4
LG OLED77C1PUB	85	$2,280	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❗	🔼	OLED	4
LG OLED77C2AUA	85	$2,500	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	❗	🔼	OLED	4
Sony XR-77A80J	85	$2,500	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	❗	🔼	OLED	4
Sony XR-77A80CK	85	$2,700	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	❗	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	❗	🔼	OLED	4
LG OLED77G1PUA	84	$2,885	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	❗	🔼	OLED	4
Samsung QN75QN90A	82	$2,000	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	❗	🔼	LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
70-INCH AND LARGER TVs *Continued*															
Samsung QN75QN85B	80	$1,800	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-75X95K	80	$2,500	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG OLED77B2PUA	80	$2,000	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🟡	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	OLED	4
Samsung QN75QN90B	79	$2,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN75Q80B	76	$1,600	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🟡	🔼	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-75X90J	75	$1,540	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 75QNED99UPA	74	$2,850	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD75X85K	71	$1,200	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 75NANO90UPA	69	$1,075	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏫	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN75Q70A	68	$1,300	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 75UQ8000AUB	68	$730	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Samsung QN70Q60A	68	$1,345	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🟡	⏬	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
TCL 75R635	68	$1,295	🟡	🔼	🔼	⏫	⏫	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 82UP8770PUA	68	$1,105	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	🔼	⏫	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN75LS03B	68	$2,300	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	⏫	🟡	⏫	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN75Q7DA	68	$1,295	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN75TU7000	67	$680	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	⏬	⏬	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Samsung QN75Q60BD	66	$995	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 75NANO80UPA	66	$900	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 70UQ9000PUD	65	$700	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 75UP7670PUB	65	$600	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Samsung UN75TU690T	65	$650	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
LG 70UP7070PUE	65	$540	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Samsung QN75Q60B	64	$1,000	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD75X80CK	64	$1,000	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 75UQ7590PUB	63	$700	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Sony KD75X80K	62	$1,000	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 70UQ7070ZUD	62	$600	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
TCL 75S535	62	$800	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏬	🟡	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN70Q60BD	62	$1,000	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🟡	⏬	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
70-INCH AND LARGER TVs *Continued*															
LG 75NANO75UPA	62	$850												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung UN75AU8000	61	$950												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 75S555	61	$930												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 75U6G	61	$705												LCD (LED)	4
LG 70UQ7590PUB	61	$550												LCD (LED)	2
LG 75UP7070PUD	60	$745												LCD (LED)	2
LG 70NANO75UQA	60	$650												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung UN70TU700D	60	$625												LCD (LED)	2
LG 75UP8070PUA	60	$700												LCD (LED)	3
LG 70UP8070PUA	60	$680												LCD (LED)	3
Insignia NS-75F301NA22	59	$850												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 75S546	59	$1,300												LCD (LED)	3
Onn 100071708	58	$530	–	–										LCD (LED)	4
LG 75UQ7070ZUD	58	$690												LCD (LED)	2
LG 75NANO75UQA	57	$895												LCD (LED)	3
Vizio P75Q9-J01	57	$1,500												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 75U800GR	56	$1,400												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 75S446	55	$650												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 75U7G	55	$1,300												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 70A6G	55	$480												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 75S455	55	$540												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 75U6H	54	$700												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 75A6G	53	$460												LCD (LED)	4
Amazon B08T6JZTH4	52	$800	–	–										LCD (LED)	4
Onn 100044717	52	$580	–	–										LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 75A6H	51	$610												LCD (LED)	4
Toshiba 75C350KU	51	$570												LCD (LED)	4
Vizio M75Q7-J03	48	$900												LCD (LED)	4
Vizio V705-J03	47	$640												LCD (LED)	3
Vizio V756-J03	46	$780												LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M75Q6-J03	46	$850												LCD (LED)	3

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
70-INCH AND LARGER TVs *Continued*															
Vizio V755M-K03	46	$710	▼	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	●	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M70Q6-J03	45	$600	▼	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	●	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
65-INCH TVs															
✓ **Sony** XR-65A95K	86	$3,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN65S95B	86	$1,800	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
✓ **Samsung** QN65S95BD	86	$1,995	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
✓ **Sony** XR-65A90J	86	$2,800	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
✓ **LG** OLED65G2PUA	85	$2,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **LG** OLED65C2PUA	85	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **LG** OLED65C2AUA	85	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **LG** OLED65C1PUB	84	$950	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Sony** XBR-65A8H	84	$1,375	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Sony** XR-65A80J	84	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN65QN90B	83	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **Sony** XR-65A80K	82	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN65QN90A	81	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** OLED65A2PUA	81	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	3
✓ **Sony** XR-65A80CK	81	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN65QN9DA	80	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
✓ **Samsung** QN65QN90BD	80	$1,700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **Samsung** QN65QN85BD	79	$1,395	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** OLED65B2PUA	79	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN65QN85B	79	$1,400	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
✓ **Samsung** QN65QN95B	79	$3,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** OLED65B2AUA	78	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
✓ **Sony** XR-65X95K	78	$1,800	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
✓ **Samsung** QN65QN800B	77	$2,600	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **Samsung** QN65Q80BD	76	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** 65QNED85UQA	75	$1,100	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
65-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Samsung QN65Q80B	75	$1,100												LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-65X95J	75	$1,475												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65QNED85AQA	74	$1,065												LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-65X90K	73	$1,000												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65Q80A	73	$1,110												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65NANO90UPA	72	$750												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65Q70A	70	$1,100												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65QNED80AQA	70	$800												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65Q7DA	70	$1,100												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65U8H	69	$900												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65LS03B	69	$1,700												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65Q60BD	66	$950												LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD65X85K	66	$800												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65LS01B	66	$1,995												LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD65X85J	65	$700												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 65R655	65	$950												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65U7G	65	$550												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN65Q60B	65	$950												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 65R646	64	$700												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65QNED80UQA	64	$800												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 65R635	64	$950												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN65TU8300	64	$675												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung UN65TU700D	64	$500												LCD (LED)	2
TCL 65R648	63	$1,620												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65NANO80UPA	63	$650												LCD (LED)	4
LG 65UP8000PUA	62	$505												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung UN65TU7000	61	$500												LCD (LED)	2
Samsung UN65AU800D	61	$650												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 65U6G	61	$450												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65U6GR	61	$500												LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
65-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Samsung UN65AU8000	61	$650	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	⏬	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD65X80CK	61	$700	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD65X80K	60	$700	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 65NANO75UQA	60	$650	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 65UQ8000AUB	59	$500	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
LG 65UQ7070ZUE	59	$475	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Insignia NS-65DF710NA21	59	$360	⏫	🔽	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD65X75K	58	$580	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 65UQ9000PUD	57	$580	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
TCL 65S546	57	$500	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 65UP7000PUA	57	$515	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
TCL 65S535	57	$600	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔽	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Insignia NS-65F501NA22	56	$390	⏫	🔽	🟡	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Onn 100071705	55	$400	–	–	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	4
Vizio P65Q9-J01	55	$800	🔽	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65U6H	55	$500	🔼	🟡	🔼	🔼	🟡	🔽	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Amazon QL65F601A	54	$550	–	–	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Amazon B08T6J1HG8	53	$600	–	–	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
TCL 65S455	53	$370	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	4
LG 65UQ7570PUJ	53	$480	⏫	⏫	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
TCL 65S446	52	$480	🟡	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 65A6G	50	$480	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65A65H	49	$400	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 65A6H	49	$420	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Philips 65PFL4756	49	$420	🔼	🔽	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M65Q6-J09	49	$500	🔽	🟡	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	3
Toshiba 65C350KU	48	$400	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Vizio V655-J09	47	$450	🔽	🟡	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 65R6E4	47	$380	🔼	🟡	🟡	🟡	⏬	🔼	🟡	🔽	🔼	🟡	🟡	LCD (LED)	3
Onn 100012587	45	$300	–	–	🟡	🟡	⏬	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	3

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
55- TO 60-INCH TVs															
Samsung QN55S95B	87	$1,450	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
LG OLED55C2PUA	86	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
LG OLED55G1PUA	86	$1,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Sony XR-55A90J	85	$1,800	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Sony XR-55A95K	85	$2,500	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
LG OLED55C1PUB	84	$900	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
LG OLED55C2AUA	84	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
LG OLED55G2PUA	84	$2,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Samsung QN55QN90B	83	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG OLED55B2PUA	81	$1,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Samsung QN55QN90A	81	$900	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-55A80K	81	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Samsung QN55QN90BD	81	$1,300	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG OLED55A1PUA	80	$875	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	3
LG OLED55B2AUA	80	$1,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
Samsung QN55QN85A	80	$1,150	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG OLED55A2PUA	79	$900	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	3
Samsung QN55QN85B	79	$1,200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q80B	78	$950	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55QN95B	78	$1,800	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG 55QNED85UQA	78	$700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55QN85BD	77	$1,200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q80A	77	$825	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG 55QNED85AQA	77	$1,000	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q80BD	75	$1,100	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG 55NANO90UPA	75	$655	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-55X90K	72	$900	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Sony XR-55X90J	72	$825	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN55TU8300	71	$500	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▼	▼	●	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
LG 55QNED80UQA	70	$700	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	●	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q7DA	70	$900	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▼	▲▲	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
55- TO 60-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Samsung QN55Q70A	69	$900												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q60A	69	$575												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN55LS03B	69	$1,495												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 55R635	66	$625												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55LS01B	66	$1,495												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung QN55Q60B	66	$700												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN60Q60B	65	$800												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN55Q60BD	65	$750												LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD55X85K	64	$700												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN55TU700D	64	$400												LCD (LED)	2
TCL 55R655	63	$795												LCD (LED)	4
LG 55UP8000PUA	62	$365												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 55U7G	62	$520												LCD (LED)	4
LG 55UQ9000PUD	62	$450												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 55R646	61	$600												LCD (LED)	4
Toshiba 55M550KU	61	$330												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN55AU8000	60	$500												LCD (LED)	3
Insignia NS-55F301NA22	60	$450												LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD55X80J	60	$500												LCD (LED)	4
LG 55UQ8000AUB	60	$400												LCD (LED)	2
Sony KD55X80CK	60	$700												LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD55X80K	60	$580												LCD (LED)	4
LG 55NANO75UQA	59	$500												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 55U6G	58	$370												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 55S446	57	$320												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 58U6HF	57	$375												LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD55X75K	57	$480												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 55U6GR	56	$370												LCD (LED)	4
Insignia NS-58F301NA22	56	$310												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 55S535	55	$450												LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
55- TO 60-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Hisense 58R6E3	55	$300	▲	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	▼	●	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 55A6H	55	$320	▲	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	▼	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 55U6H	55	$395	▲	●	▲	▲	●	▼	●	▼	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
LG 55UQ7570PUJ	54	$370	▲▲	▲▲	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▼	●	●	▲	LCD (LED)	2
LG 55UP7000PUA	54	$150	▲▲	▲▲	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▼	●	●	▲	LCD (LED)	2
Amazon B08P3QVFMK	52	$440	–	–	▲	▲	▼	▼	●	▼	●	▼	▲	LCD (LED)	4
TCL 55S455	52	$270	●	▲	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	●	▲	●	●	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 55A65H	51	$300	▲	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	▼	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M55Q7-J01	51	$750	▼	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	▲	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 55A6G	50	$410	▲	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▼	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Amazon B08P3QB66R	50	$400	–	–	▲	▲	▼	▼	●	▼	●	▼	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Vizio M55Q6-J01	50	$480	▼	●	▲▲	▲▲	▼▼	▼	●	●	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio V555M-K01	48	$370	▼	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	●	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
Toshiba 55C350KU	47	$300	●	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▼	▲	▼	▲	LCD (LED)	4
Vizio V585-J01	44	$500	▼	●	▲	▲	▼▼	▼	●	▼	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio V555-J01	42	$350	▼	●	●	●	▼▼	▲	●	▼	●	●	●	LCD (LED)	3
46- TO 52-INCH TVs															
$ **LG** OLED48C1PUB	86	$800	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **LG** OLED48C2PUA	84	$950	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **LG** OLED48A1PUA	80	$600	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	3
$ **LG** OLED48A2PUA	79	$600	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	▲	▲	●	▲	OLED	3
✓ **Sony** XBR-48A9S	78	$1,500	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	●	●	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
✓ **Sony** XR-48A90K	78	$1,200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▲▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲	OLED	4
$ **Samsung** QN50QN90A	77	$700	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▼	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
✓ **Samsung** QN50QN90B	75	$1,200	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▼	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **Sony** XR-50X90J	74	$805	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	▲▲	●	▼	▲	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** 50UP8000PUA	70	$350	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	●	▼	●	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
✓ **Samsung** QN50Q80B	69	$950	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	▲	▼	●	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4
$ **LG** 50NANO75UPA	67	$565	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲▲	▼▼	▼	●	▲	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	3
$ **Sony** KD50X80K	67	$530	▲▲	▲▲	▲	▲	●	▼	●	●	▲	●	▲	LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
46- TO 52-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Sony KD50X85K	65	$650	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 50NANO75UQA	64	$500	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 50UQ8000AUB	64	$350	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Samsung QN50Q60B	64	$650	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
LG 50UQ9000PUD	61	$380	⏫	⏫	➖	➖	➖	🔼	➖	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Samsung UN50AU8000	61	$450	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN50Q60BD	61	$650	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 50U6G	59	$340	🔼	➖	⏫	⏫	🔽	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Philips 50PFL4756	56	$310	🔼	🔽	🔼	⏫	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	➖	➖	LCD (LED)	3
TCL 50S455	54	$240	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	➖	➖	LCD (LED)	4
Amazon B08T6F8YBH	54	$360	—	—	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔽	➖	➖	➖	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 50A6G	54	$620	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
LG 50UQ7570PUJ	54	$330	⏫	⏫	➖	➖	⏬	🔼	➖	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	2
Toshiba 50C350KU	53	$270	➖	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Amazon B08SVZ775L	53	$320	—	—	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 50A6H	53	$290	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
TCL 50S546	52	$370	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	🔽	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
TCL 50S446	52	$240	➖	🔼	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 50A65H	51	$250	🔼	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio V505-J09	49	$300	🔽	➖	⏫	⏫	⏬	➖	➖	🔽	➖	➖	➖	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio V505M-K09	46	$300	🔽	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	🔽	➖	➖	➖	LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M50Q6-J01	46	$400	🔽	➖	🔼	🔼	⏬	🔽	➖	➖	➖	➖	➖	LCD (LED)	3
39- TO 43-INCH TVs															
$ **LG** OLED42C2AUA	81	$900	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	⏫	🔼	🔼	⏫	➖	🔼	OLED	4
✓ **Sony** XR-42A90K	80	$1,150	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	⏫	🔼	🔼	🔼	➖	🔼	OLED	4
✓ **LG** OLED42C2PUA	80	$900	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔼	⏫	🔼	➖	⏫	➖	🔼	OLED	4
✓ **Samsung** QN43QN90B	71	$1,200	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	🔽	⏫	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	4
✓ **Samsung** QN43Q60A	67	$550	⏫	⏫	⏫	⏫	➖	🔽	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	3
✓ **Sony** KD43X85K	67	$600	⏫	⏫	🔼	🔼	➖	🔽	🔼	➖	🔼	➖	🔼	LCD (LED)	4

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results									Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
39- TO 43-INCH TVs *Continued*															
Samsung QN43LS01B	66	$995												LCD (LED)	4
Sony KD43X80J	66	$400												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN40N5200	66	$270				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
LG 43NANO75UQA	65	$380												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN43LS03B	64	$1,000												LCD (LED)	4
LG 43UP8000PUA	64	$280												LCD (LED)	3
LG 43NANO75UPA	64	$350												LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN43Q60B	63	$550												LCD (LED)	3
Sony KD43X80K	62	$450												LCD (LED)	4
Samsung UN43AU8000	60	$380												LCD (LED)	3
Insignia NS-43F301NA22	59	$210												LCD (LED)	3
LG 43UQ7590PUB	58	$270												LCD (LED)	2
Pioneer PN43951-22U	57	$320												LCD (LED)	3
LG 43UP7000PUA	57	$295												LCD (LED)	2
Insignia NS-42F201NA22	56	$190				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
LG 43UQ9000PUD	56	$380												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 40S334	55	$230				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
TCL 43S435	55	$330												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 43S446	54	$250												LCD (LED)	3
TCL 43S455	54	$220												LCD (LED)	4
TCL 40S355	52	$350				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 43A6H	52	$210												LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 43H5500G	51	$225				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Toshiba 43V35KU	51	$190				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Toshiba 43C350KU	50	$230												LCD (LED)	4
Hisense 40A4H	50	$190				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Hisense 43A6GX	49	$200												LCD (LED)	3
Vizio D40f-J09	49	$200				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Vizio V435-J01	47	$270												LCD (LED)	3
Onn 100012584	47	$200	–	–										LCD (LED)	3
Vizio M43Q6-J04	42	$300												LCD (LED)	3

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results								Features	
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	HD picture quality	UHD picture quality	HDR	Viewing angle	Motion blur	Sound quality	Versatility	Data privacy	Data security	Display type (backlight)	HDMI input
32-INCH TVs															
Samsung UN32N5300	65	$230				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Sony KD32W830K	63	$350				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Samsung QN32LS03BB	62	$595				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Samsung UN32M4500	62	$200				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Samsung QN32Q60A	61	$500												LCD (LED)	3
LG 32LM627BPUA	59	$170				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
TCL 32S334	56	$190				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Insignia NS-32F201NA22	56	$100				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Insignia NS-32DF310NA19	55	$100				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
LG 32LQ630BPUA	55	$180				NA								LCD (LED)	2
LG 32LM577BZUA	54	$140				NA								LCD (LED)	2
TCL 32S330	52	$150				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
TCL 32S327	51	$150				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Hisense 32A4H	50	$160				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
TCL 32S355	50	$140				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Philips 32PFL4664	48	$120				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
TCL 32S335	48	$155				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Toshiba 32V35KU	47	$130				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	3
Vizio D32f4-J01	47	$170				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2
Vizio D32f-J04	46	$180				NA	NA							LCD (LED)	2

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/tvs.

HOW WE TEST: **Overall Score** combines test results and survey data. **Predicted reliability** reflects the likelihood that a TV will have problems in the first five years of ownership. **Owner satisfaction** is based on the proportion of members who are extremely likely to recommend their TV. Findings are from CR's Summer Quarterly Surveys. **HD picture quality** assesses detail, color accuracy, and contrast using signals from special test patterns and videos, via an HDMI input, after the TV is adjusted using standard picture controls. **UHD picture quality** is evaluated similarly, using non-HDR 4K UHD content. (HDR content is tested separately.) **HDR**—high dynamic range—indicates how effectively the TV can reproduce the enhanced quality of HDR content. Very effective HDR can also reproduce fine gradations of shadow detail from black to white and display a wider range of colors. Ineffective HDR presents images that are no better than regular standard dynamic range (SDR) TVs. **Viewing angle** evaluates picture quality for clarity and color accuracy at various horizontal and vertical viewing angles. **Motion blur** evaluates how well the display can present a blur-free image during motion scenes. **Sound quality** is measured from the set's built-in speakers with subjective listening and test gear. We listen for overall clarity of sound, depth of bass, volume levels, and audible distortion. **Versatility** indicates features that increase a TV's utilities or capabilities. Scores for **data privacy** and **data security** are a measure of how the TV and its service providers collect, share, use, and protect your personal data. These scores are based on technical testing and the evaluation of publicly available documentation.

WORSE — BETTER | CR RECOMMENDED | CR SMART BUY

STREAMING PLAYERS

Streaming devices let you watch great TV shows and movies from streaming services on a TV that lacks its own WiFi connection. Even people with a smart TV might prefer one of these devices to get better performance or more apps.

OUR ADVICE

Streaming media players from all the major brands—Amazon's Fire TV, Apple TV, Google TV, and Roku—now offer 4K models that support high dynamic range (HDR) content, which can produce brighter, more colorful images when played on TVs that do a good job with it. (Our TV ratings include a separate score for HDR performance.)

Many models feature voice control, with built-in microphones in the player or on the remote control, so you can search for shows and movies using your voice. Some also let you control the TV using the player's remote.

Many newer streaming players let you listen in private by using earphones with the player's remote or by using an app on your smartphone.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Skip models that only support HD-quality video. Even if you don't have a 4K set now, your next TV will almost certainly be a 4K model, ideally one that can do a good job with HDR. You won't even save much if you buy an HD-only player—so this is a case where futureproofing by buying a slightly more expensive product is worthwhile.

EXPERT TIP

Download your streaming player's smartphone app, which will make it easier to enter text and passwords or use voice search if the player's remote lacks a built-in microphone.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results: Ease of use	Test Results: Features
4K STREAMING MEDIA DEVICES				
✓ **Nvidia** Shield TV Pro	82	$200	⌃	⌃⌃
✓ **Nvidia** Shield TV	77	$150	⌃	⌃⌃
✓ **Amazon** Fire TV Cube (3rd Gen)	75	$140	⌃	⌃⌃
✓ **Roku** Ultra (2022)	73	$100	⌃⌃	⌃
✓ **Roku** Streaming Stick 4K+	73	$70	⌃⌃	⌃
✓ **Amazon** Fire TV Stick 4K Max	73	$55	I	⌃⌃
✓ **Amazon** Fire TV Stick 4K	69	$50	I	⌃⌃
✓ **Roku** Streaming Stick *4K*	68	$50	⌃	⌃
✓ **Google** Chromecast with Google TV	67	$50	I	⌃⌃
✓ **Apple** TV 4K (128GB, 2022)	67	$150	I	⌃⌃
✓ **Roku** Express 4K+	65	$40	⌃	⌃
✓ **TiVo** Stream 4K	62	$40	I	⌃
Onn Android TV UHD Streaming Device	53	$20	I	I
Anker NEBULA 4K Streaming Dongle	53	$60	I	I

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/streaming-media.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score is based on the results of all our tests. **Ease of use** reflects how easy the device is to use on a daily basis. **Features** includes factors like the number of streaming services supported and digital assistant support, gaming controller support, wireless audio and video casting/mirroring support, etc. **Price** is approximate retail.

WORSE ⌄⌄ ⌄ I ⌃ ⌃⌃ BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED | $ CR SMART BUY

ROAD REPORT

NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

FIRST DRIVE

2023 Toyota Crown

The new Crown is designed to bridge the gap between sedans and SUVs. The base 236-hp four-cylinder hybrid engine is EPA-rated for up to 41 mpg combined. The top Platinum trim we drove has a 340-hp turbocharged hybrid powertrain and is EPA-rated for up to 30 mpg combined. **CR'S TAKE:** Acceleration is invigorating in the Platinum. Ride and handling are competitive, but the car is neither luxurious nor sporty. Front seats are comfortable; the rear seat is snug for tall people. The cabin lacks the upscale ambience expected at the price.

BASE PRICE RANGE $39,950-$52,350
DESTINATION CHARGE $1,095
PRICE AS DRIVEN $53,445

ASK OUR EXPERTS

Can roadside assistance help me if my EV runs out of charge?

An electric vehicle warns you before it **runs out of range,** so if you can't make it to a charger, you'll at least be able to **safely pull over.** If you find yourself in this jam, many roadside assistance services—including AAA and those offered by automakers and insurers—**will tow you home** (if it's not too far) or to a charging station. They may even send a mobile charger out to you. Many new EVs come with at least a few months of roadside assistance. Check your car's manual or the automaker's website to see what is covered.

THE VITAL STATISTIC

34%

Increase in Urban Car Crash Fatalities

From 2010 to 2019, city streets got more dangerous, according to a 2022 report from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. Streets have also gotten busier, with more pedestrians and cyclists, and drivers more likely to ignore posted speed limits. Caution is key when driving in the city, the foundation says, as is following traffic laws.

RECALL

Ford & Lincoln

More than 382,000 Ford Explorer and Lincoln Aviator SUVs from the 2020 through 2023 model years and Lincoln Corsair SUVs from the 2020 through 2022 model years are being recalled because their backup cameras may stop working. Some of these vehicles were recalled in 2021 and will need another fix. **WHAT TO DO:** Ford and Lincoln dealerships will perform a software update, free of charge. Owners can contact Ford at 866-436-7332.

TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

How to Drive Safely in Foggy Weather

Fog—like the kind that can form on spring mornings—makes it difficult to see ahead when you're driving. If you have to drive through fog, slow down and increase your following distance. Turn on your car's defrosters (front and rear) to keep the windshield and front side and rear windows clear. Also turn on the headlights—and fog lights, if your car has them—even in daytime so that your car is more visible to other motorists. But avoid using the high beams, says Jen Stockburger, who manages CR's headlight testing program. The brighter, higher-angle light will reflect off fog's water droplets, further reducing visibility and increasing glare. If you can't see through the fog, pull over as soon as it's safe to do so.

PHOTO: TOYOTA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

The Cars That Save You Money

Some cost thousands more for routine maintenance and repairs over the years than others. Here, the best deals.

by Benjamin Preston

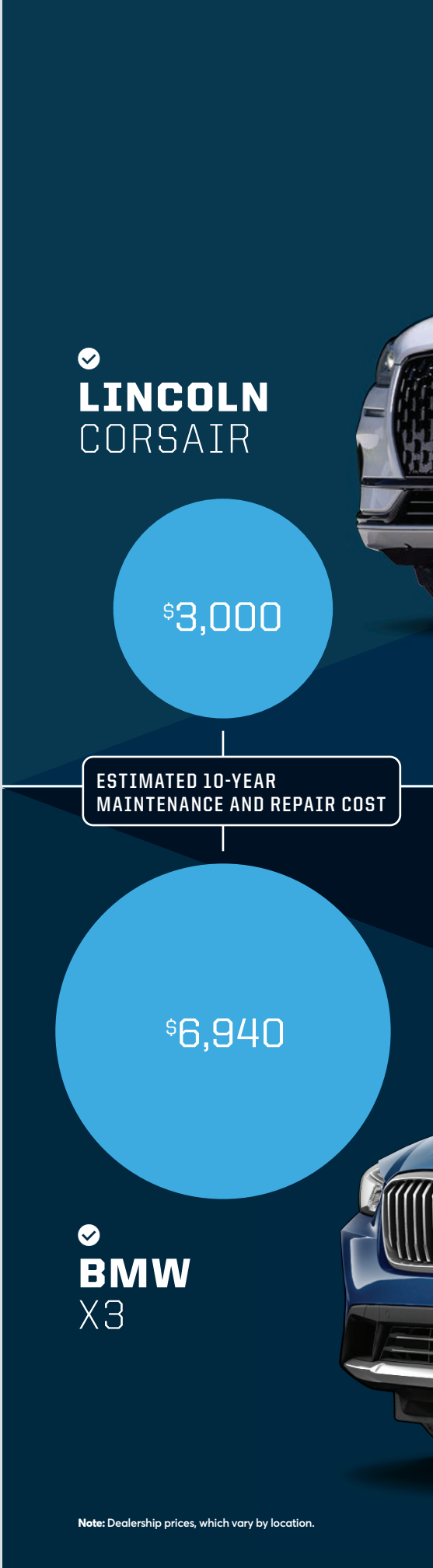
YOU THINK YOU'VE just met the car of your dreams—it corners well and has great fuel economy and is loaded with all of the latest safety features. But before you take the plunge, there's one more thing you should carefully consider: how much it costs to maintain and repair. The difference in routine maintenance and repair costs can be huge between vehicles that are otherwise very similar in price, type, and fuel economy. So choosing wisely can save you thousands over the long run.

"We analyzed data from our Annual Auto Survey, where respondents told us about maintenance and repair costs," says Steven Elek, program leader of Consumer Reports' auto data analytics. "Over a 10-year period, some vehicles can be twice as expensive to maintain as others in the same category."

For example, according to CR's data, a Lincoln Nautilus (which was called the MKX until 2019) costs $480 to maintain in its first five years, whereas an Audi Q7—another premium SUV—costs $1,700 over the same period. And cars that are expensive to maintain early on become markedly more expensive as they get older.

Using the annual survey data collected from thousands of CR members, our analysts have determined the routine maintenance and repair costs for both brands and models at five years and 10 years of ownership. That includes regular checkups, such as oil changes and tire rotations, as well as the cost to replace things like brakes, drive belts, and lightbulbs, which all eventually wear out as mileage piles on. (The longer you hold on to a car, the more important these numbers are, because these costs only increase over time.)

The charts and advice on the following pages show the brands and cars that cost the most and least to maintain and repair. Some models are not expensive to own when they're relatively new but can cost a bundle to keep on the road as they age. That can be especially important to used-car shoppers: The deal you think you're getting on a used European luxury car may not be so hot once you've been handed your first repair bill.



$69

OIL CHANGE
Every 10,000 miles

$100

$650

FRONT BRAKE REPLACEMENT (PADS/NEW ROTORS) Every 50,000 miles

$1,300

$1,377

ALTERNATOR REPLACEMENT
Every 100,000 to 150,000 miles

$1,950

5 Things to Know When Buying a Car

EXPENSIVE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR costs can eat into the savings offered by a fuel-efficient and reliable car. The most important thing to know is that you can have it all—a trustworthy car with great fuel economy that is less expensive to keep on the road for many years than other models. Here are some truths we uncovered when digging through our data.

1.
Domestic brands often cost less to maintain and repair than foreign brands.

When it comes to routine maintenance costs for services like oil changes and air filter and brake replacements, domestic brands are often cheaper than imports, particularly when it comes to luxury models. "The difference in cost between some European imports and domestic brands is particularly stark," says John Ibbotson, CR's chief mechanic. For example, the prices for the first two scheduled maintenance services for a 2023 Mercedes-Benz GLC 300—a European luxury import—at a dealership in Union, N.J., are $585 at 10,000 miles and $1,050 at 20,000 miles. The price of the first two scheduled maintenance services for the 2023 Lincoln Corsair—a domestic luxury SUV—at a nearby Lincoln dealer is $130 at 10,000 and 20,000 miles.

CR'S ADVICE: Among gas-powered vehicles, American, Japanese, and Korean nonluxury models tend to cost the least to maintain and repair. If you want to buy a luxury car, Lincoln and Buick have much lower maintenance costs than most, and Lexus—known for reliability—has maintenance costs lower than the average for luxury brands.

2.
EVs and hybrid cars cost the least to maintain.

EVs and hybrids will not only save money on fuel but also cost less to maintain than their conventional rivals. EVs don't require regular oil, filter, and fluid changes—a big part of the maintenance and repair budget for a gas vehicle. On average, hybrid cars cost only slightly more to maintain than EVs over a 10-year period ($2,785 vs. $2,320). And a typical hybrid car owner will save nearly $1,000 in maintenance costs over 10 years compared with a hybrid SUV owner.

CR'S ADVICE: An EV is a great way to save on fuel, repair, and maintenance costs. Buying a reliable hybrid car can save you almost as much in maintenance and repairs.

3.
Cars with sport and premium trims cost more to buy—and to repair.

The larger wheels that come with sport and premium trims give your car a flashier look but come with more expensive tires that are more likely to sustain damage from potholes and other road hazards. You can buy the 2023 Toyota RAV4 with either 17-inch or 19-inch wheels. Replacing the 19s with a set of the same original equipment tires will cost over $200 more—a difference that could snowball if you hit a lot of potholes that damage the tires and wheels. High-tech features that come with premium trims, such as massaging seats and adaptive suspensions, are nice to have, but the more complex the features, the more likely they are to fail, says CR mechanic and longtime master technician Mike Crossen. And that can cost you: The optional adaptive suspension on the Audi Q5 can cost around $2,000 to repair.

CR'S ADVICE: Consider whether you really need larger wheels or tires. Chances are you don't. If you want the high-tech premium features that come with some luxury cars and higher trim levels, be sure to choose a model rated high for reliability in CR's ratings.

4.
Pay close attention to maintenance and repair costs when buying used.

A reliable new car will run well for years without much more than regular oil changes and occasional tire and brake replacements. But somewhere around 80,000 to 100,000 miles, manufacturers start to recommend replacing things like spark plugs, coolant, and timing belts. These jobs can quickly become expensive if you buy an older car, especially if you purchase a model with higher-than-average maintenance costs.

CR'S ADVICE: If you're buying a used car that is approaching or has reached the 80,000- to 100,000-mile range, check its service records to see what big-ticket items have been—or will soon need to be—addressed.

5.
Check independent and chain repair shops for lower prices.

Dealership service departments typically do good work but have historically been the most expensive option. An independent repair shop may be able to do the work at a better price than a dealership service department. Many national chains, such as Jiffy Lube, Goodyear Auto Service, and NAPA AutoCare Center, work on a wide variety of car brands and vehicle types and are often more affordable than dealerships.

CR'S ADVICE: You can find a reputable repair shop in your area with this CR search tool: **CR.org/carrepair.** If you prefer to have your car serviced at a dealership, be sure to shop around. "Dealerships have a lot of discretion on pricing," Crossen says. We found that replacing front brakes on a 2023 Lincoln Corsair cost about $725 at a dealership in New Jersey, while just across the river, in New York, another dealership was offering the same service for $550.

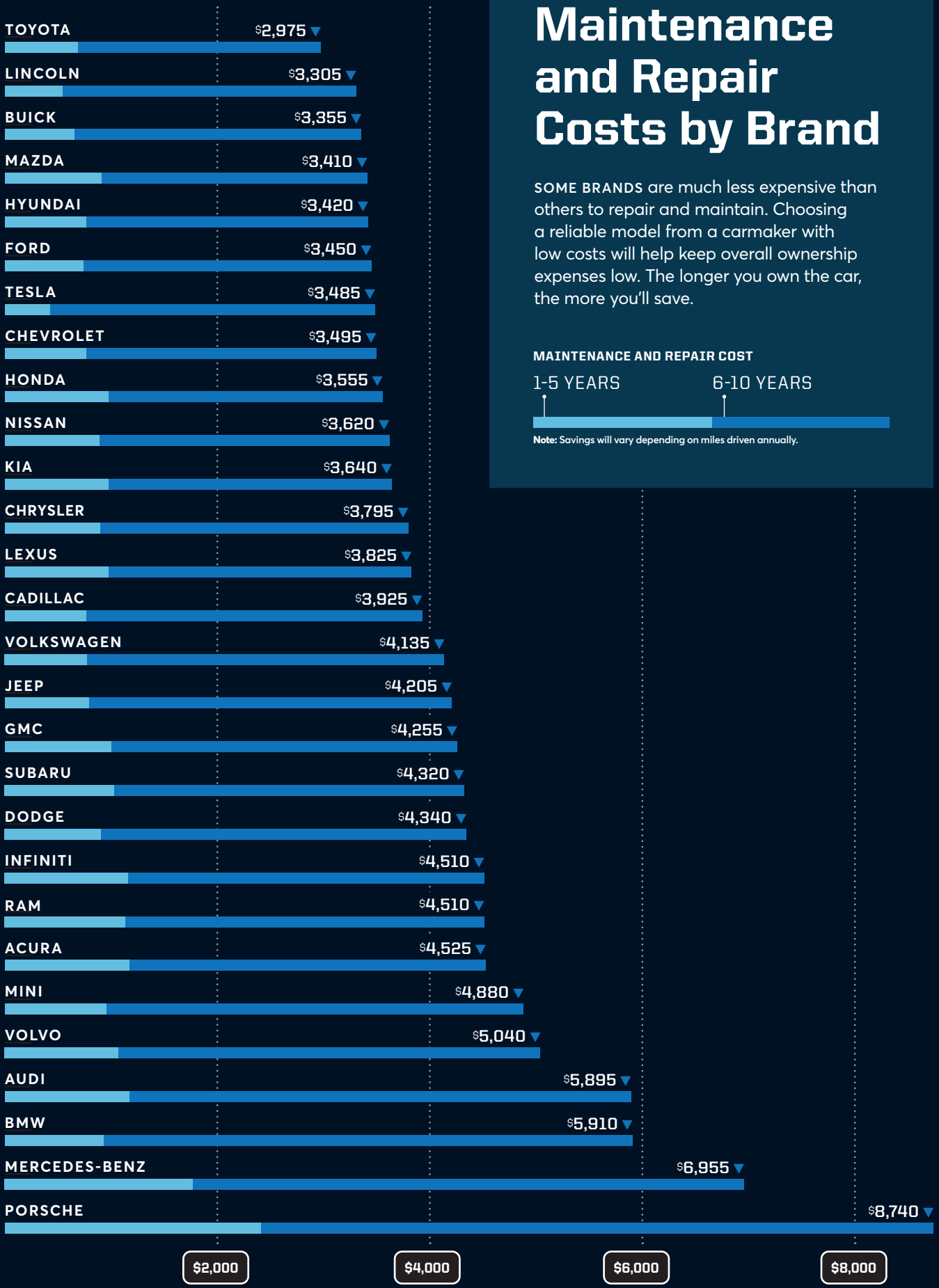
PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD: LINCOLN; BMW

Maintenance and Repair Costs by Brand

SOME BRANDS are much less expensive than others to repair and maintain. Choosing a reliable model from a carmaker with low costs will help keep overall ownership expenses low. The longer you own the car, the more you'll save.

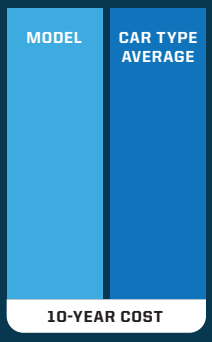
MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR COST

Note: Savings will vary depending on miles driven annually.



Cars That Cost the Least (in the Long Run)

WE'VE CRUNCHED the numbers to present you with the cars recommended by CR that have the lowest routine maintenance and repair costs (there are many that are cheaper to maintain, but they're not recommended). These numbers are based on 10 years of CR's data for each model, so autos that were introduced more recently than 10 years ago are not included. We also show the average repair and maintenance expenses for each car type to give you an idea of how much money you can save.



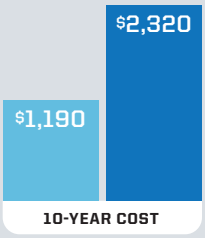
ELECTRIC

✓ NISSAN LEAF

$28,040 - $36,040

70 OVERALL SCORE

EVs cost less to own than similar gasoline models because there are no regular fluid changes and fewer moving parts to wear out. The Leaf is relatively inexpensive to buy; opt for the smaller wheels to keep replacement costs low.



MIDSIZED CAR

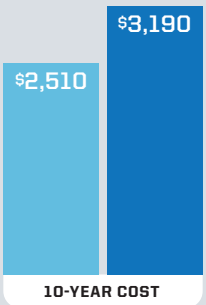
✓ TOYOTA CAMRY

$26,220 - $36,645

82 OVERALL SCORE

The Camry costs less to own than most sedans, thanks to good fuel economy, strong reliability, and low repair costs. Available with 17-, 18-, or 19-inch wheels, the smaller wheels are less likely to get damaged, and may benefit from less-expensive tire replacements.

ANOTHER GOOD CHOICE:
Hyundai Sonata **$2,865**



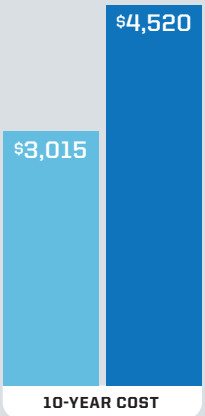
LUXURY CAR

✓ LEXUS ES HYBRID

$42,640 - $49,430

86 OVERALL SCORE

A cushy highway cruiser with good reliability and fuel economy, the ES is also relatively cheap to repair and maintain. It has high-tech features, but CR's data show that the hybrid version is less expensive to maintain than all-gas cars in the same class.



COMPACT SUV

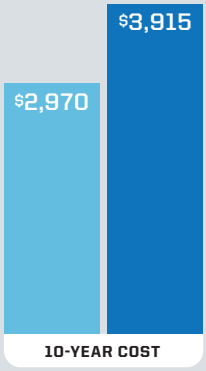
✓ TOYOTA RAV4

$27,975 - $39,030

72 OVERALL SCORE

Available with gasoline, hybrid, and plug-in hybrid powertrains, the RAV4 combines SUV versatility with above-average reliability and fuel economy, and low maintenance costs. Avoid higher-end trims to save money on tires.

OTHER GOOD CHOICES:
Honda CR-V **$3,395**
Hyundai Tucson **$3,470**



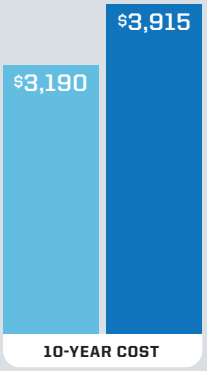
MIDSIZED SUV

✓ FORD EDGE

$37,945 - $46,485

78 OVERALL SCORE

Choose the smaller turbocharged 4-cylinder engine option for better fuel economy and lower ownership costs. Also steer clear of the sporty ST trim, which adds larger wheels, low-profile tires, and bigger brakes that cost more to replace.



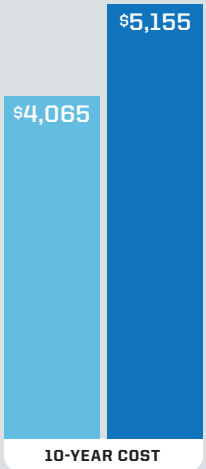
LUXURY 2-ROW SUV

✓ LEXUS RX

$47,400 - $61,600

81 OVERALL SCORE

Available with a turbocharged gas engine or a hybrid powertrain, the RX has historically strong reliability and fuel economy, and low ownership costs. The sporty F Sport Performance trim comes with a more powerful hybrid powertrain and suspension upgrades that are more expensive to repair.



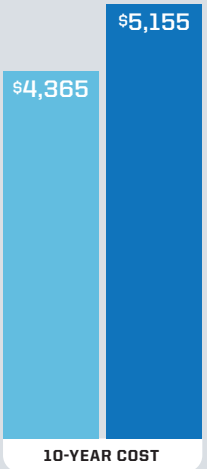
LUXURY 3-ROW SUV

✓ BUICK ENCLAVE

$44,800 - $59,470

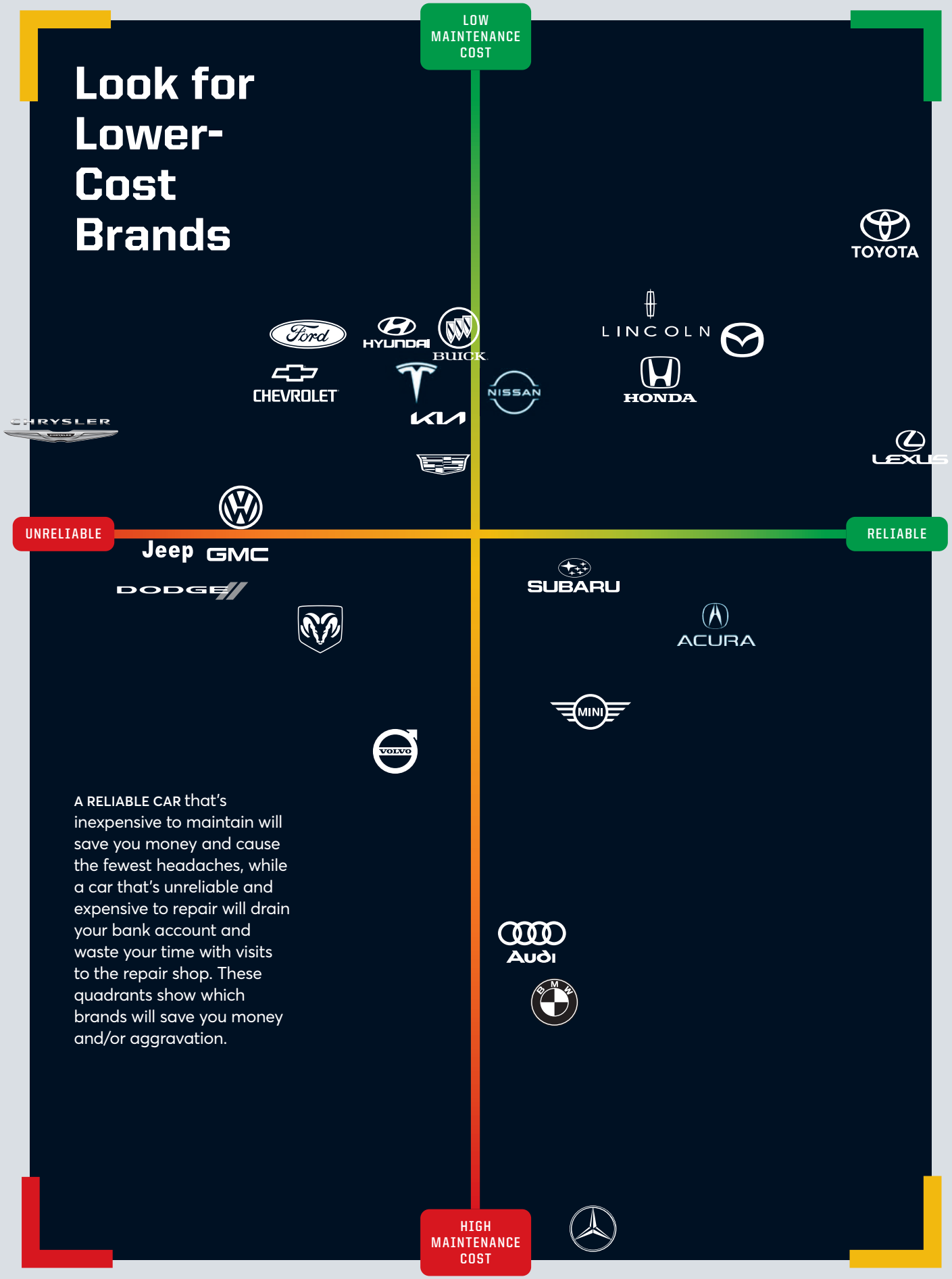
76 OVERALL SCORE

Among luxury SUVs, the Enclave stands out for its low ownership costs. Models equipped with the optional 20-inch wheels will have more-expensive tire replacements, and may be more prone to wheel damage because there's less cushioning to absorb big bumps.



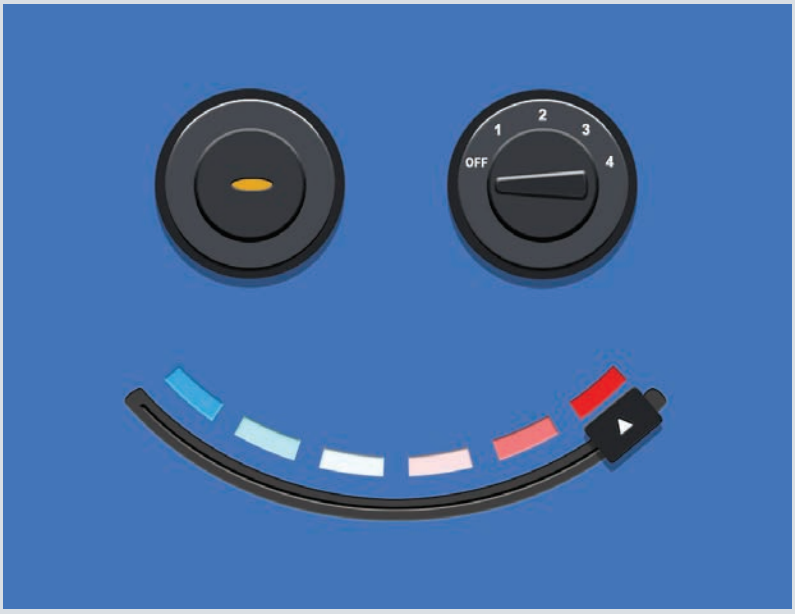
WORSE — BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED

Look for Lower-Cost Brands



A RELIABLE CAR that's inexpensive to maintain will save you money and cause the fewest headaches, while a car that's unreliable and expensive to repair will drain your bank account and waste your time with visits to the repair shop. These quadrants show which brands will save you money and/or aggravation.

Autos With the Easiest Controls



TECHNOLOGY IS GREAT, but so is simplicity—especially when you're trying to change the radio station or adjust the temperature while driving. Unfortunately, today's cars can do so many things that they often overcomplicate basic tasks, requiring drivers to navigate through multiple touchscreen menus to make simple adjustments that could once be accomplished with the turn of a knob.

"Simple controls—especially ones that you can use by gripping a knob or feeling a button—are easier to use without taking your eyes off the road," says Kelly Funkhouser, CR's manager for vehicle technology. "Touchscreens require drivers to focus on the screen, search for where to place a finger, and then try to tap that spot. This can be difficult while driving down a bumpy road."

CR's experts have evaluated the interiors of hundreds of the latest vehicles, and we know it's possible to balance function and form without skimping on features, comfort, or style. The cars below are recommended by CR and have the easiest-to-use controls in their category.

84 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET-FRIENDLY CAR

Honda CR-V

Honda went back to basics when it designed the controls on the new Civic, HR-V, and CR-V. "Nearly all the physical controls are where you expect them," says Alex Knizek, automotive engineer at CR. The touchscreen is easy to navigate, knobs and buttons control often-used features, and the gear selector is a traditional lever. The EX trim keeps the ultrasimple controls and adds welcome niceties like intermittent wipers, too.

ALTERNATIVES: Toyota Camry, Ford Maverick

75 OVERALL SCORE

COMPACT LUXURY SEDAN

Audi A3

We've found that the more expensive a car is, the more convoluted its controls tend to be. Today, luxury brands show off with big screens, which are all the rage. But Audi bucks that trend with the A3, which has the most straightforward interior we've encountered in a modern luxury vehicle. Even its quirks—the volume control is a touchpad located between the seats, and the stubby gear selector is unusual—are relatively easy to get used to.

ALTERNATIVE: Acura Integra

70 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Nissan Leaf

Want to go electric but you're turned off by touchscreen-only controls? With the exception of its odd gear selector, the Nissan Leaf's simple climate and audio controls set its interior apart from most other EVs' complex interiors. The Leaf has knobs for tuning and volume, buttons for all climate functions, and easy steering wheel controls. There's no learning curve—just get in and go. Plus it has low ownership costs (see page 104).

ALTERNATIVES: Genesis GV60, Kia Niro EV

78 OVERALL SCORE

FAMILY SUV/MINIVAN

Chevrolet Traverse

The three-row Traverse has a simple audio system with a volume knob, a traditional lever-style gear selector, and knobs and buttons for climate control functions. A big, physical Home button helps you easily escape any confusing touchscreen menus. Unlike in some other vehicles, the Traverse's controls don't get more complicated as you add options, so even the most feature-laden trim level is still easy to use.

ALTERNATIVES: Kia Carnival, Subaru Ascent

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

LUXURY ELECTRIC VEHICLES

BMW i4

An Engaging Electric Sports Sedan

84
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 94

HIGHS Quick acceleration, short braking distances, sharp handling, front-seat comfort, impressive fit and finish, no tailpipe emissions

LOWS Cramped rear seat, complicated controls

POWERTRAIN 536-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct-drive transmission; all-wheel drive

RANGE 271 miles

PRICE $52,000-$68,700 base price + $995 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $73,245

TO CREATE THE I4, BMW essentially replaced the gas engine in a 4 Series Gran Coupe with electric motors. During this transformation, the automaker managed to retain the driving experience that BMW buyers have come to expect: smooth power, quick acceleration, and taut handling. Its sleek silhouette is augmented by a practical hatchback design. But because the i4 is based on an architecture shared with conventional BMWs, interior space is compromised.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

All-wheel drive is available only in the most powerful and expensive i4 version—the M50. We love its prodigious 536 hp and the exhilarating, nearly silent acceleration from its dual electric motors. We clocked it from 0 to 60 mph in a scant 3.5 seconds, making it one of the quickest cars we've ever tested.

The i4 handles curves with the aplomb typical of a BMW. Quick yet natural steering and hardly any body roll make it feel like a precision instrument as it carves up a winding road. It's not quite as agile as a 3 Series, due to the extra weight the EV version carries, but it's still impressive.

The ride is quite firm, as with many sporty cars, but the adaptive suspension is absorbent most of the time. Rougher pavement will result in passengers feeling the occasional sharp hit.

RANGE AND CHARGING

Our tested i4 M50 has an EPA-rated 271-mile driving range. An 11-kilowatt onboard charger facilitates home-charging that's quicker than most EVs—figure on gaining about 35 miles of range per hour of charging. We were able to add 65 miles of range in 15 minutes at a public DC fast-charging location, which is competitive.

CABIN COMFORT

The interior is beautifully finished, full of soft-to-the-touch surfaces, supple leather, and brushed chrome. The front seats are comfortable and supportive, with generous seatback side bolsters plus four-way lumbar adjustment. The rear seat is tight on headroom and has an uncomfortably upright seatback, while the bottom cushion is short on thigh support.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

BMW's iDrive infotainment system has taken a sharp turn away from user-friendliness. Now it even packs the climate controls into the touchscreen, which means that some tasks, such as adjusting the fan speed or seat-heaters, require multiple steps.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA are standard. Highway-speed AEB is optional, not standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

MIDSIZED 3-ROW SUVs

Toyota Highlander

New Engine Brings More Noise, Not More MPG

80
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 82

HIGHS Comfortable ride, easy to get in and out of, roomy second-row seat

LOWS New turbo four-cylinder engine isn't as refined as the V6, redesigned infotainment system is less user-friendly

POWERTRAIN 265-hp, 2.4-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 22 mpg on regular

PRICE $36,420-$52,625 base price + $1,335 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $46,328

FOR 2023 TOYOTA has replaced the Highlander's long-serving V6 engine with a turbocharged four-cylinder. The three-row midsized SUV remains a roomy, functional, and likely reliable choice. But the turbo-four isn't as pleasant a powertrain as the old V6, and the meager gain in highway fuel economy doesn't seem worth the trade-off.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

The Highlander's new 265-hp, turbo four-cylinder supplies plenty of low-range and midrange power, and it feels more adept than the six-cylinder when it comes to scooting around slower cars in a two-lane passing zone. But our test numbers say it's actually about a half-second slower from 0 to 60 mph, and its gritty sound when accelerating makes us long for the silky-smooth V6. What's more, the fuel economy is the same 22 mpg overall in our tests as before. However, Toyota says the Highlander's emissions are much improved. Still, we think the hybrid model is the best choice.

The ride is more firm than plush, but the suspension proved capable of keeping occupants isolated from the rough stuff. It acquits itself fine through corners and remains secure even when pushed.

CABIN COMFORT

The front seats are comfortable for many body types. But the plastic center console steals some of the driver's right knee space, and a few people found the door armrest poorly placed for all-day comfort.

The second-row seat is spacious, with lots of legroom and elbow room. The seat slides fore and aft, and it reclines in two separate sections, enabling plenty of passenger and cargo flexibility. The third row is low, firm, and tiny compared with other competitors in the segment. Toyota's lever-operated mechanism moves the second-row seat forward to create a path to the third row with a single pull, but it's more awkward than the simpler, push-button setups some competitors use.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

Most controls inside the Highlander are easy to use. The new infotainment system's touchscreen is larger, but a few added steps are required for certain tasks. And because there isn't a home screen, it can be tedious to jump between menus like the radio and navigation. It's also annoying that the volume knob is located all the way over on the right side of the display.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, LKA, lane centering assistance, and adaptive cruise control are standard. BSW and RCTW are standard on all trims except for the base L, where they aren't available.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

LUXURY COMPACT SUVs

BMW X1

Much Improved but Still Some Issues

77
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 86

HIGHS Nimble handling, short stopping distances, fuel economy, seat comfort, fit and finish

LOWS Stiff ride, inconsistent power delivery, complicated controls

POWERTRAIN 241-hp, 2.0-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 7-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 28 mpg on premium

PRICE $39,100 base price
+ $995 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $46,495

THE X1'S REDESIGN brings more power, better fuel efficiency, increased interior room, and (finally) standard blind spot warning and rear cross traffic warning. Even with a few sidesteps, such as inconsistent low-speed power delivery and less user-friendly controls, the X1 is a big improvement over its lackluster predecessor, making it one of the better entry-level luxury SUVs.

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

A switch from a conventional eight-speed automatic to a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic brings better fuel economy—up to a best-in-class 28 mpg overall—and a sportier feel out on the road. The transmission shifts quickly and smoothly, and the gutsy, 241-hp turbocharged four-cylinder always has ample oomph in reserve. But, as is often the case with dual-clutch setups, there are low-speed woes. In the X1's case, the power is delayed when you step on the gas pedal coming out of a rolling stop, followed by an abrupt burst of acceleration—even when you try to be gentle—which together make it difficult to drive smoothly.

Handling is nimble, and the X1 carves through turns easily. The steering has a natural heft and delivers decent feedback to the driver about tire grip, and body roll is well controlled through corners. But the ride is too firm much of the time: The suspension feels unyielding when encountering potholes and big bumps in cities.

CABIN COMFORT

Step into the cabin and you're greeted with high-quality materials, nicely stitched leather, metal speaker covers, and lots of padded surfaces. Our drivers raved about the optional sport seats, which have well-defined side bolsters.

There's more room inside than the X1's small size would suggest; the driver has loads of headroom, plenty of knee space, and a clear view of the instruments. The rear seat is more spacious than before, with good headroom for adults and lots of foot space underneath the front seats.

CONTROLS AND USABILITY

BMW has caved to the latest fashion trends and moved away from tactile, physical knobs and buttons, including the iDrive infotainment controller knob. Many tasks require going through the touchscreen, which often means extra steps. For example, almost all climate functions, other than adjusting the temperature, require first pressing a climate icon at the bottom of the screen to bring up a separate menu.

SAFETY

AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, and LDW are standard. Highway-speed AEB is only optional.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

Ratings › **Turbos and EVs** BMW's improved X1 vaults to the head of its class, and its new i4 EV sports sedan is thrilling. The Highlander's new turbo engine brings more noise but little else.

Make & Model	Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results												Active Safety Features		
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Range, miles	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW/RCTW
SUVs, 2-ROW $35,000-$45,000																		
✓ **BMW X1** 2.0T	77			86	28	405							54.0	7.1	124	S	O	S
✓ **Audi Q3** 2.0T	75			82	23	365							52.5	7.8	126	S	S	S
✓ **Lexus UX250h** 2.0H	75			75	37	395							54.0	8.8	137	S	S	S
✓ **Mini Cooper Countryman** 2.0T	75			81	25	405							53.0	8.3	120	S	–	–
✓ **Volvo XC40** 2.0T	68			70	24	335							54.0	7.3	132	S	S	S
Cadillac XT4 2.0T	58			76	23	370							55.0	7.6	128	S	O	S
Mercedes-Benz GLB250 2.0T	56			81	26	415							54.5	6.8	125	S	S	S/O
SUVs, 3-ROW $40,000-$50,000																		
✓ **Kia Telluride** 3.8L	87			92	21	390							53.5	7.2	127	S	S	S
✓ **Toyota Highlander** 2.4T	80			82	22	400							52.0	7.7	133	S	S	O
✓ **Hyundai Palisade** 3.8L	80			85	21	395							52.5	7.1	132	S	S	S
✓ **Chevrolet Traverse** 3.6L	78			90	20	435							50.5	7.3	130	S	O	O
✓ **Subaru Ascent** 2.4T	76			90	22	420							52.0	8.0	129	S	S	O
✓ **Mazda CX-9** 2.5T	74			77	22	450							50.0	7.9	139	S	S	S
✓ **Volkswagen Atlas** 3.6L	71			80	20	370							51.0	8.7	135	S	S	S
Jeep Grand Cherokee L 3.6L	53			71	19	445							50.5	8.8	141	S	S	S
Ford Explorer 2.3T	49			74	21	370							51.5	7.4	136	S	S	S
Nissan Pathfinder 3.5L	45			81	21	385							52.5	7.6	138	S	S	S
Kia Sorento 2.5T	45			82	25	435							52.5	6.5	133	S	S	S
ELECTRIC VEHICLES $45,000-$65,000																		
✓ **Kia EV6**	91			90	105 ◫	282							54.5	4.7	126	S	S	S
✓ **Genesis GV60**	84			91	95 ◫	248							54.5	5.1	131	S	S	S
✓ **BMW i4**	84			94	96 ◫	271							55.5	3.5	129	S	O	S
✓ **Tesla Model 3**	78			82	130 ◫	358							55.0	5.3	133	S	S	–
✓ **Hyundai Ioniq 5**	76			91	98 ◫	256							53.0	4.7	131	S	S	S
Audi Q4 E-Tron	67			86	95 ◫	236							52.5	5.9	133	S	S	S
Polestar 2	53			72	89 ◫	260							55.5	4.4	123	S	S	O

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score,** which factors in **road-test results, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction,** and **advanced safety,** which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as automatic emergency braking at highway speed, pedestrian detection, blind spot warning, and rear cross traffic warning. A dash (–) means no such safety system is offered; O means it's optional on at least some trims; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

WORSE — BETTER | ✓ CR RECOMMENDED | CR GREEN CHOICE

◫ Miles-per-gallon equivalent (MPGe).

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Spring Fever!

Check out some of the strangest signs of the season.

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Submitted by Cary Kassebaum, Cottonwood, AZ

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Submitted by Marilyn Stark, as seen in San Bruno, CA

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